The Rise of The Lesser Notables in Cairo's Popular Quarters: Patronage Politics of The National Democratic Party and The Muslim Brotherhood

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ABSTRACT

Ever since the military takeover of 1952, the post-monarchic political system of Egypt has been dependent upon a variety of mechanisms and structures to establish and further consolidate its powerbase. Among those, an intertwined web of what could be described as ‘patronage politics’ emerged as one of the main foundations of these tools and was utilized by the regime to establish the fundamentals of its rule. Throughout the post-1952 era, political patrons and respective clients were existent in Egyptian politics, shaping, to a great extent, the policies implemented by Egypt's rulers at the apex of the political system, as well as the tactics orchestrated by the populace within the middle and lower echelons of the polity. This study aims at analyzing the factors that ensured the durability of patronage networks within the Egyptian polity, primarily focusing on the sort of social structural reconfiguration that has been taking place in the popular communities of Egypt in the beginning of the 21st Century. Dissecting the area of Misr Al Qadima as an exemplar case study of Cairo’s popular quarters, the research mainly focuses on examining the role of the lesser notables, those middle patrons and clients that exist on the lower levels of the Egyptian polity within the ranks of the National Democratic Party and the Muslim Brotherhood. Henceforth, the sociopolitical agency of these lesser notabilities shall constitute the prime concern of the writing and, in doing so; this research also attempts to draw some linkage between the micro-level features of the popular polities of Cairo and the macro-level realities of the Egyptian polity at large, in the contemporary period.

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Chapter I: Introduction, Theoretical Framework and Methodology/Approaches

Aims and Objectives

In the light of the increasingly expanding literature dealing with an encompassing conception of state-society relations, which goes beyond the definition of the state as a sheer amalgamation of institutions, there seems to be a need to revisit the concept of political patronage and try to somehow fit it within this larger sketch of state-society relations. This research aims at analyzing the conditions that give rise to patronage in the Egyptian polity, venturing then into dissecting some of the recurrent features of this patron-client web in order to examine the main factors that affected the prevalence of patronage politics in Egypt, particularly throughout the Mubarak phase. Emphasizing upon the upcoming research questions, this study seeks to provide a better understanding of the factors that ensured the durability of these patronage networks until present. This will be primarily achieved via tackling the issues of transition and liberalization that are associated with the sort of social structural reconfiguration that has been witnessed in the Egyptian polity in the beginning of the 21st Century. The main focus of this research will be dedicated to examining the socioeconomic and political roles of the "lesser notables" as intermediaries in the realm of state/society relations[1]. In the course of this writing, the term 'lesser notables' refers to those middle patrons and clients that flourish on the lower

[1]Look pages 48-50 for an elaboration on the concept of the "lesser notables". Chapter II also deals with this term in detail, contextualizing the notables and their lesser successors, and the role they played within the Egyptian polity ever since the Ottoman period. Hana Batatu was one of the first contributors that used the term to describe a certain category of rural notability in Syria in *Syria's Peasantry, The Descendants of Its Lesser Rural Notables, And Their Politics*. The term 'lesser notable' was later used by Salwa Ismail to describe the type of notabilities that this research deals with.

levels of the Egyptian polity within the ranks of the National Democratic Party (NDP) and the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), and whose sociopolitical agency appears to be comparatively discarded in the literature pertaining to Middle East politics.

Research Questions

With the seeming mobilization of societal echelons and sociopolitical classes that is taking place in the Egyptian polity in the early 21st Century, there is indeed a new realm of relevant political actors that clearly differs from the ones prevalent in the previous periods. For example, the 1980's and 1990's witnessed the elevating importance of the political agency of the business community as opposed to the military and the technocratic classes, which were rather dominant during the socialist heydays of Nasserite Egypt. Could this be considered as a part of a bigger wave of political culture change within the country? And to what extent has this alteration empowered new classes/echelons of patrons and clients? And, if so, can one identify a certain set/sets of neo-patrons and clients? Moreover, what is the role of the lesser notables, those middle-range patrons/clients that play a sizable role in shaping the dynamics of the Egyptian polity? And what are the major commonalities/differences between those of them that adhere to the NDP in comparison to the others that ally with the Muslim Brotherhood?

Literature Review

Undertaking this writing requires the usage of several primary and secondary sources. Taking into account the relatively informal nature of the information required, primary testimonies from relevant personnel in the NDP and the Muslim Brotherhood shall formulate an essential section of the resources used in this study. In addition, a wide scope of secondary sources will also be synthesized. Subsequently, this Literature

Review will be divided into two sections. The first one covers the theoretical framework of postulations dealing with patronage politics and the relevant applications that relate to the Egyptian case, whereas the second displays the major writings that contribute to the methodology and approaches that this research will prospectively follow.

Theoretical Framework

In general, patronage politics could be considered as an existent theme within almost all political systems. Some analysts have indeed argued that patronage is expected to flourish further in those political systems that are more dependent upon personal rule in their dynamics. Jackson and Rosberg state, "It is a dynamic world of political will and action that is ordered less by institutions than by personal authorities and power…but without the assured mediation and regulation of effective political institutions…At the apex of all personal regimes is a ruler, a paramount leader who enjoys a position of uncontested supremacy".[2] Consequently, the existence of a ruler with such unmatched power allows him to ensure the sustainability of the regime.

However, for this aim to be achieved, a series of collaborations and alliances between the ruler and several other actors has to take place to make this process of consolidation of power a mutually beneficial course of action that is advantageous to the various parties involved. This is actualized through patronage, which is a complicated web, usually consisting of several patron-client networks[3]. Here, an amalgamation of mutual beneficiaries that vertically expands throughout the system in a top-down approach is evident and, subsequently, co-option, rather than coercion, becomes more widespread as an essential medium for exercising political power.

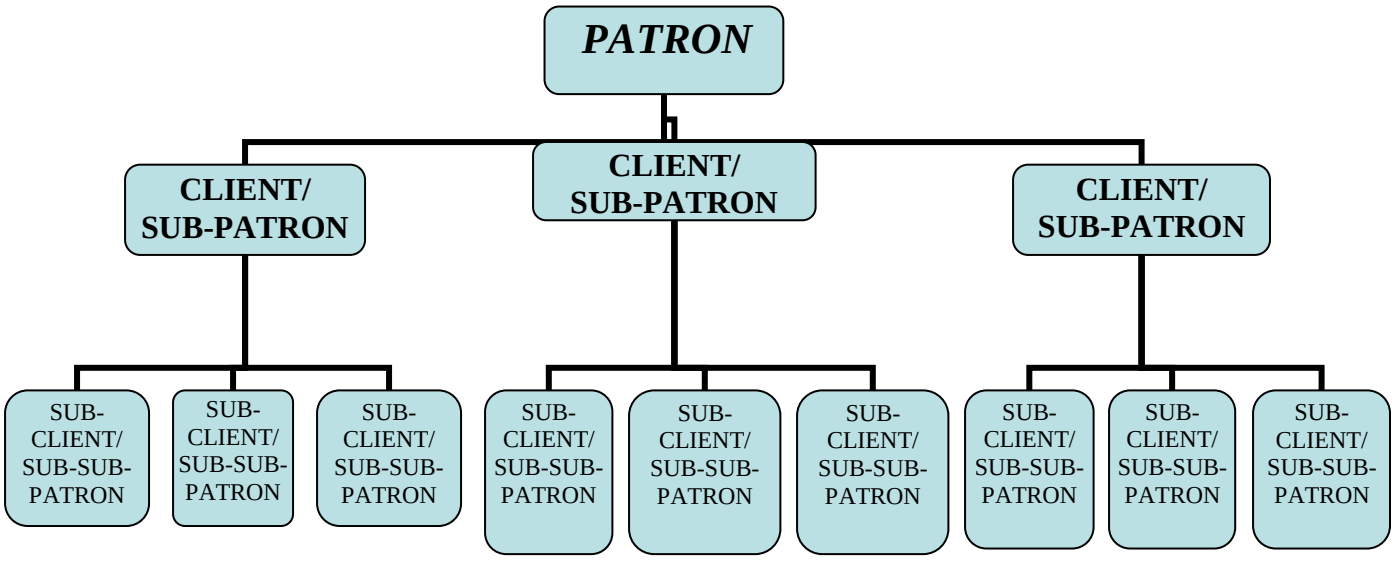
[2]treboR H. Jackson and Carl G. Rosberg (1981) *Personal Rule In Black Africa*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, p.12-22
[3] Ibid, p.39-42

John Martinussen expands upon this notion, portraying the scheme of patronage networks in a concise fashion:

> The system of patronage…works by the personal ruler doling out generously from the public resources and benefits he controls. This patronage is extended to his own clan members and also to a selection of clan leaders whose political support is deemed necessary. The clan leaders can then, at their level within the power hierarchy, use some of their resources in a similar manner to ensure political backing from certain lower-placed clan leaders – and so on, until crumbs from the tables of the mighty eventually fall on the small-scale farmers and other poor people.[4]

The term "clan" refers to political alliances and interest groups. Martinussen elaborates that the machinations by which patron-client ties extend from the apex of the political system to its bottom are best described in the milieu of webs and networks that work their way in a top-down approach. Illustration 1.a below shows a generic network of patron-client relations. Of course sub-patrons and clients tend to emerge as the network approaches further towards the bottom of the hierarchy/polity.

Illustration 1.a: The patron-client model



[4] John Martinussen (1993) *Society, State, &Market*. London: Zed Books. p.193

Patronage politics and Informal Networks

Henry Moore states that, with the inception of the post-1952 phase, the Egyptian polity was a vivid arena for patronage politics. He cites that in Egypt informal groups of relatives and friends play a more important role in patron-client networks than the formal ones.[5] Generally speaking, with the advent of patron-client networks as a primary medium for facilitating political power, the majority of Egyptians; i.e. the common people or the *sha*`b, gradually developed a sense of skepticism towards their rulers along with a conviction of the inefficiency of the formal/official venues of the government. "The *sha*`b understand the high costs of participating in formal politics and thus develop other institutions to serve their needs…Elites structure politics so that most people cannot participate in the system or their participation is not much more than a charade".[6]

More often than not, the *sha*`b is suspicious of the government and its intentions on the one hand, and on the other they are more concerned with the concept of "*shilal*" or "cliques". For them, the importance of the *shilla* surpasses the importance of any formal sort of union. Moore also resorts to the observation that these *shilal* or cliques were somehow encouraged to form conglomerate units together, pivoted by the growing bloating of the public sector in the 1960's. "The more heavily bureaucracy weighs upon the society; the more likely it is that vertical patron-client networks give way to horizontal *shilal*. In Egypt, corruption appears to be extensive yet decentralized. As

[5] Henry Moore (1977) "Clientelist Ideology And Political Change" In *Patrons and Clients*, ed. Ernest Gellner and John Waterbury. London: Duckworth. p.271
[6] Diane Singerman (1995) *Avenues of Participation: Family, Politics, & Networks In Urban Quarters of Cairo*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, p.9

bureaucracy becomes heavier, it is likely to become more corrupt, especially near the top, in the absence of effective political coordination and supervision".[7]

More recently contributors, such as Diane Singerman, paid special attention to the concept of informal networks and the sizeable role such networks play as alternative venues of political participation, especially for those within the lower-middle and lower classes in the Egyptian polity. In what could be described as a very relevant anecdote and a starting point to the subject-matter of this research, which attempts to shed some light on the politics of the middle and lower echelons of patrons and clients in the Egyptian polity, Singerman asserts that, in actuality, little attention has been given to those societal forces in the conventional literature tackling Egyptian politics:

> While there are classic works on elite politics in Egypt, its political economy, class formation, interest groups, the bureaucracy, and the military, the politics of the common people or the *sha'b* have received little attention. Their political demands, actions, and grievances remain of secondary interest to elite analysis. It has been anthropologists, historians, and sociologists who have told us about the politics of the common people while the "high politics" of the elite…remained the domain of political scientists. However, if one truly wants to consider state-society relations, it seems only natural to try to link up these two arenas of interests.[8]

In addition to the fact that these classes have been, more or less, discarded in the typical analysis of Egyptian politics, Singerman asserts also that, in practice, they are also considerably influential, with an actual role to play in the overall portrait of the Egyptian polity.

Here, it is also noteworthy to mention that informal politics are not exclusively the domain of the lower-middle and lower classes of the Egyptian society. In fact, the

[7] Henry Moore (1977) "Clientelist Ideology And Political Change" In *Patrons and Clients*, ed. Ernest Gellner and John Waterbury. London: Duckworth. p.271
[8] Diane Singerman (1995) *Avenues of Participation: Family, Politics, & Networks In Urban Quarters of Cairo,* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press. p.5.

Egyptian elite also tends to utilize the machinations of informalities, perhaps in a different fashion than the lower echelons, and sometimes to penetrate the formal structure of the official institutions, yet the end-result is to serve some political benefit. Therefore, it is safe to note that the essence of informal networks somehow infiltrates through the hierarchy of the Egyptian polity as well. Hence, Singerman also asserts that, when it comes to the lower echelons, those informal networks which were primarily enhanced in the lack of formal/official avenues of political participation are in fact open arenas for patrons and clients to flourish. "The *Sha`b* have turned exploiting the government into a fine art. People in the community who had a particular talent for dealing with bureaucrats or a wide range of connections to elite politicians and officials were sought after and valued. Individuals repeatedly stated that the government was something to "take from", an outside external force to be patronized"[9]

These characteristics are actually congruent to what Salwa Ismail later described as the *biytkabrluh* figures in the popular quarters of Cairo. The portrayal of Hajj Saleh, a strongman in Bulaq, exemplifies that: "The ethos of someone *biytkabarluh* involves rights and obligations on the part of the person occupying the position. Moral deference toward [this] figure derives from relations of kinship, regional origin, and the moral standing of the person". On the one hand, Hajj Saleh's active participation in charitable work gives him the image of a "man of good", and on the other his links with the police reaffirm his status as a "man of power". Subsequently, the hajj is regularly utilized by the state apparatus as an influential intermediary with the local community.[10] Indeed, here the profile of Hajj Saleh fits the persona of the "lesser notables", which are described by

[9] Ibid, p. 39.
[10] Salwa Ismail (2006) *Political Life in Cairo's New Quarter: Encountering The Everyday State*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. p.64.

Ismail as the political powerhouses of Cairo's new urban quarters. Interestingly, these lesser notabilities are characterized, as noted by Ismail, with an evident amalgamation of pragmatic and moral statures combined. These notables in fact constitute the focal point of this research.

The Trap of Cultural Arguments

Of course here it is noteworthy to mention that patronage politics is not a natural element that is imbedded solely in the Egyptian political culture per se. In fact, similar features of informal politics could be traced and proven in other polities over the globe. Nazih Ayubi prudently notes that:

> Although patronage and clientelism have a long history and an elaborate vocabulary in the Middle East…they are not the inevitable outcome of certain essential and permanent cultural traits. They are in reality behavioral correlates to articulated modes of production and attitudinal accompaniments of a stage of transition that requires a higher degree of intermediation between the rural and the urban, between the local and the central, between the public and the private. The study of patron-client relationships, cliques, cronies and informal networks…can be useful and indeed very interesting. Their validity will be constrained however if they are viewed as being exclusively culturally specific, rather than socially and politically contingent.[11]

Thus, putting in mind the considerable impact of the prevalent modes of production on the political beliefs and attitudes within a human polity, it is rather essential to avoid any sort of cultural essentialism that would signify patron-client networks as a peculiar feature of the Arab polity at large, or the Egyptian one in specific. Accordingly Ayubi states that, for instance regarding the *Shila*, a concept that was mentioned earlier as an important unit of analysis mainly introduced by H.C. Moore and others, "*Shilas* and other types of cliques and informal networks should not be regarded as a Middle Eastern

[11] Nazih Ayubi (1995*) Overstating The Arab State*. London: I. B. Tauris. p.168.

peculiarity: we know increasingly more about their presence in countries such as Italy, Japan and even the United States of America".[12]

But here we are faced with an analytical dilemma: If, as stated earlier, patron-client networks actually appear and flourish in a wide variety of human polities, despite the clear differences such polities might bear in terms of governing systems and depending upon the modes of production that have prevailed in them, could we still make use of such a concept in understanding any polity at all? Once again, the challenge here is to make the proper linkage between the micro and the macro levels of analysis:

> It is this analytical shift, however, from micro- to macro- politics that represents the most challenging conceptual difficulty with clientelism. Given the intellectual history of a concept drawn from anthropology and applied without much theoretical adjustment to complex political systems, it is not surprising that the concept loses much of its explanatory power as one moves from interpersonal relationships to clientelistic structures (i.e. corporate clientelism) at the local or the national level.[13]

Therefore contextualization, in terms of historical factors and political/economic circumstances, is essential if we are to trace patron-client bonds and potentially attempt reaching some observations or findings pertaining to the realities of a human polity. In fact, Ayubi attempts to venture through this dilemma by analyzing the historical context in which patron-client networks developed in the Middle Eastern polity at large. This will be further displayed in Chapter II.

Putting Patrons and Clients in Context: The Rise of the Lower Echelons

In *Power, Class, And Foreign Capital in Egypt: The Rise of The New Bourgeoisie*, Malak Zaalouk describes the rise of a powerful group of commercial agents

[12] Ibid, p.169
[13] Ibid.

within the Egyptian middle class post *Infitah*, or the open door policy, which was inducted by President Anwar Sadat in the 1974. She asserts:

> Although on a global level the group does not own the means of production it does fulfill the function of global capital through its activity, and is simply placed on the lower echelons of the global bourgeois hierarchy. Locally the group very definitely partly owns and controls the means of production, both through its membership in the ascendant new bourgeoisie as well as its connections with the state bourgeoisie still controlling the state property. The group's class position is therefore quite complex…linking class structures of both peripheral and metropolitan societies. These groups…provide the access points for foreign economic entry and political influence.[14]

In a sense, these groups represent some of the horizontal *shilal* born out of lower level alliances that are formed to deal with the state's cumbersome bureaucracy. Indeed, their influence was further enhanced as fillers of the market and the space vacated by the state in the prime of the *Infitah* era. Overall, one can safely argue that what could be dubbed as a new class of patrons and clients was in the making in the post-*Infitah* era. Shortly after occupying their position in the socioeconomic map, the commercial agents emphasized upon by Zaalouk were in fact the reserves that were drawn upon by Gamal Mubarak and clique in order to formulate Egypt's new class of patrons, i.e. the business society, as will be dissected in the fifth and sixth chapters.

Assessing the structural reconfiguration that took place within the Egyptian polity leading up to the rise, or perhaps the reemergence, of a particular category of patrons/clients and the demise of another is indeed essential. The reemergence here actually refers to the fact that, despite the seeming domination that the state had over the modes of production in most of the Arab World in the beginning of the post-colonial era, this has not been always the case. Over most of the Islamic dynasties that spanned with

[14] Malak Zaalouk (1989). *Power, Class, And Foreign Capital in Egypt: The Rise of The New Bourgeoisie*. London: Zed Books.

the Arab conquest of the Middle East, commercial agents had played an important role as viable societal actors and sometimes mediators between official authorities and informal/popular groupings, as will be shown in the context of Chapter II. Moreover, and even during the "modern" era, Nazih Ayubi states that, "The expansion of home market, the export of agricultural commodities and the distribution of imported goods all provide a basis for a rapid increase in the 'circulation function' and for an economic strengthening of the role of members of the merchant class, who essentially act as 'linkmen' between modes of production or divisions of labor".[15]

Practically speaking, Carrie Wickham also argues that the with gradual retreat of the state from the public sphere, which accompanied the implementation of the *Infitah* policy, the room was more or less open for the popular forces to operate, and a prime popular force was that of the Islamic movement. "Mainstream Islamists such as the Muslim Brotherhood have developed a parallel network of Islamic institutions including private clinics, mosques, schools, banks, and investment companies. Moreover, beginning in the 1980's, Islamists have won control of the executive boards of professional syndicates and university faculty clubs".[16] Interestingly, the Muslim Brotherhood had to rely upon a scheme of patronage politics that was quite similar to that of the Egyptian regime in order to establish its foundational networks: "Islamic activists have cultivated ties of patronage and employees at the lower rungs of the state bureaucracy, as well as with elected members of local municipal councils, enabling them to bend existing rules and evade control efforts from above".[17]

[15] Nazih Ayubi (1995). *Overstating The Arab State*. London: I. B. Tauris. p.171.
[16] Carrie Wickham (1994). "Beyond Democratization: Political Change in The Arab World". *Political Science & Politics*. Vol. 27, No.3. p.508
[17] Ibid.

Indeed, within the popular quarters, the Municipal Councils (MCs) constitute a prospective venue for establishing networks and alliances between the NDP or the MB, on the one hand, and the popular notabilities, on the other, as will be displayed in chapters IV and V. Henceforth, an overview of the system of local governance in Egypt is well in place. The upcoming snapshot regarding the municipalities is essential, for it paves the way before scrutinizing the role of lesser notabilities as state/society intermediaries that partake in patronage politics at the local level. In doing so, the research at hand is especially concerned with the role that the municipality plays as a venue of formal politics that opens the door for lesser notabilities to practice political patronage and infiltrate the 'formal' state-institutions in the process.

A note on the Municipal Councils (MCs) and the Characteristics of the local system of Governance in Egypt

At the local level there are 4496 village and 199 town municipalities in Egypt. Municipalities are controlled by their elected councils, which have relatively little power[18]. Municipal elections last occurred in April 2002 and were delayed from 2006 to 2008 before being held again in 2008. Roughly 70% of the ruling NDP's candidates ran unopposed. The NDP eventually won 97% of municipal seats.[19]

In terms of local finance and fiscal decentralization, the municipalities suffer from insufficient resources and a negligible say in the management of their own budgets. They get the majority of their financial resources from the central government in the form of annual subsidies. Within each governorate, the Municipal Council is expected to

[18] "The Political Drivers of Spatial/Regional Disparities in the Middle East & North Africa: A Case Study of Egypt". The World Bank & The Maghrib Center, Georgetown University. 2008. p. 14-33
[19] Ibid.

exercise governance on the local level of the village or the town. These councils have been largely disempowered and somewhat overshadowed by the governor, whose actual jurisdictions are also quite limited when compared to the powers of the central government in Cairo[20].

Despite the variations in economic systems adopted by the government throughout the post-1952 phase, the lack of emphasis upon decentralization as a national policy was a recurrent theme within these various economic systems. The Ministry of Local Development, delegated with the authority to supervise the process of decentralization on the local level, has been receiving minimal budgetary allocations. In 1981/2 its share of the total governmental expenditure was 1.8 %, while in 1997/8 this share was even reduced to 1.5 % of the total budget.[21] Also, despite the increasing dependence of the local municipalities on the allocations coming form the central government, these state allocations were reduced or, at best, remained stagnant in a way that does not cope with the growing needs of these administrations.[22] In the recent years, however, and almost coinciding with the advent of the neoliberal program of Gamal Mubarak, the NDP has appeared more adamant on adopting a scheme of decentralization that gives the municipalities some autonomy in managing the affairs of the polities within which they operate. As shall be argued in Chapter V, it is rather safe to assume that one of the main factors that led to the NDP's adamancy on revitalizing the municipalities is, in practice, the potential role that can be played by these municipalities as the powerbases of the party in the face of the MB.

[20]Ibid
[21]Ibid, p. 96
[22]Ibid

The Politics of Popular Quarters

Salwa Ismail argues that popular classes do play a meaningful role in Egyptian politics. She draws attention to the socioeconomic structure of Cairo's haphazard (*'ashwa'iyyat*) areas and the context that nurtured the development of informal networks within these neighborhoods as a pattern of effective organization and governance. This contribution is quite relevant to this research as it sheds light on the particular dynamics that characterize the dealings of the typology of middle patrons and clients that the study at hand is concerned with.[23]

It should be noted that, with a sizeable portion of its population residing in informal/haphazard slums, Egypt's major cities like Cairo and Alexandria act as open venues for an array of informal politics. The fact that the Muslim Brotherhood has capitalized upon the already existing socioeconomic structure of such areas to further strengthen its stratum is rather apparent. According to Ismail, "The Islamists anchor themselves in oppositional spaces already formed or in the process of formation. The terms of this opposition are spatial, social, cultural, economic, and political…These neighborhoods propose a reformulation of the popular city, recovering the social role of the street".[24]

A good exemplar of that stratagem was portrayed post the October 1992 earthquake when a variety of charitable societies (*Gam`eyat*) affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood expanded their network of beneficiaries to the popular lower classes that needed food and shelter at the time, ultimately adding points to their credibility and popularity and subtracting quite a few from the regime and its personnel.

[23] Salwa Ismail (2000) "Popular Movement Dimensions of Contemporary Militant Islamism: Socio-Spatial Determinants in the Cairo Urban Setting." *Comparative Studies in Society and History*.Vol.42, No.2, April
[24] Ibid, p.379.

Salwa Ismail defines the popular social forces that emerged in the aftermath of the open door/liberalization policies as follows:

> Popular is defined in opposition to the dominant forces-the political and economic elites. It also refers to the economic and social position of a number of classes or fractions of classes which, because of the blurring of boundaries, are not easily distinguishable. The fluidity and blurring of lines has to do with occupational mobility and the fact that members of these classes hold more than one job simultaneously. A common feature between them, however, is the predominance of informal economic activities. This applies to artisans, petty traders, low-level service sector workers, construction workers, and craftsmen. [25]

Logically speaking, the relative absence of the state on the street level gave room for popular and informal networking to operate as an alternative outlet for political action. "State disengagement from welfare provision and the residents' efforts at creating self-sufficiency, in social and economic spheres, point to a significant change in state-society relations. The social or moral contract defining these relations in the 1950's and 60's has weakened, if not dissolved".[26]

Subsequently, the playground for popular networking was open for the Islamic movements to dominate. This was reflected in the ballot box in 2005 with 88 Muslim Brotherhood candidates winning their seats in the parliament. The fact that there was virtually minimal presence for the NDP and the other secular parties on the popular level, as opposed to the Islamic popular movements that dominated on the street level, gave room for the Muslim Brotherhood to score their biggest parliamentary victory to date, despite an array of irregularities that were imposed by the regime in an attempt to halt the widespread electoral success of the Muslim Brotherhood.

[25] Ibid. p.375.
[26] Salwa Ismail (2006) *Political Life in Cairo's New Quarter: Encountering The Everyday State*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. p.131

Approaches/ Theoretical Framework

The Weberian Paradigm: Benefits, Problems and Limitations

Political patronage is a socioeconomic/political phenomenon that is acknowledged within various intellectual approaches. This study shall synthesize a variety of perspectives, including, elitist, liberal, and leftist views of the term, in an attempt to construct a crucible of analytical perspectives that could dissect such a feature and display its effects on the Egyptian polity. In essence, these different perspectives bear elements of meaningfulness relating to the securitization of patronage as a socioeconomic phenomenon and this research will aim to reflect upon and utilize different aspects of such perspectives in an attempt to enrich the arguments postulated by the research. These various approaches are not mutually exclusive and can be utilized to offer an array of perspectives regarding political patronage as a social phenomenon.

The elitist approach, for example, argues for the occurrence of patronage as a natural outcome that erupts primarily due to the discrepancies in access to resources, among the populace. Quite often, the elitist classes are the main beneficiaries from such discrepancies, which grant them some sort of a preferential treatment. Regardless of the changes that might take place within the political system in terms of ideology or policies, political power is likely to remain in the acquisition of the elite classes, among which the circles of patronage are likely to rotate.[27] In the Egyptian case, this explanation holds some value that should not pass unnoticed. In is indeed realistic to say that the 'big' political patrons usually belong to certain socioeconomic classes, as was the case during the Nasser and the Sadat eras and even under Mubarak. However, the stature of these so-called elitist classes varied along these different phases. For example, as shall be

[27] J. Schwartzmantel (1987) *Structures of Power: An Introduction to Politic*s. Sussex: Wheatsheaf Books.

reviewed in the course of this study, the socioeconomic and cultural background of the 'big' patrons in the Nasser era differs to a considerable extent from those that appeared during the Sadat years and so forth.

On the other hand, liberal/pluralist analysis states that patronage takes place due to the lack of proper democratization and openness in political arenas such as the Egyptian polity, and views that, with the actualization of a properly implemented pluralist political process that allows participants equal opportunities, political patronage would most probably vanish.[28] Despite the fact that the research at hand does not adopt the aforementioned perspective, it is sometimes useful to look at patron-client networks as a deviation from the bureaucratic/ institutional prototype that is usually championed by the 'modern' nation-state. This helps in understanding and scrutinizing the intricacies of the popular communities and the entirety of the Egyptian polity, at large, by comparing the actual realities lived and the actions undertaken by the populace to the expectations they are subject to as citizens in a modern state. Via contextualizing the actions of the people in the popular polity of a city like Cairo, one notes that what is often considered as an improper/illegal act in one of the modern nation-states of today, can be perceived as mundane or ordinary in the popular community. The examples that shall be cited in this study suggest that, in the everyday dealings of the Egyptian polity, value-laden issues such as 'corruption' and public/private divides are, by and large, context-based.

Additionally, certain elements of the Weberian approach as well could be useful in the course of this research.[29] Weber views large institutions, including the military, the bureaucracy, and other political input structures not as cohesive political actors but rather

[28] Ibid
[29] Max Weber (1994) *Weber: Political Writings*. ed. Peter Lassman and Ronald Speirs. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p.225-229

as venues within which patrons and clients could flourish.[30] This perception will be presented as this study delves into scrutinizing the various formal institutions of the Egyptian state, i.e. the NDP, the cabinet, the parliament…etc and shows that, more often that not, there is no unitary logic that governs the actions of such institutions and makes them cohesive political actors. Instead, one finds that there is an ongoing process of tension and competition between contesting entourages of patrons and clients within such state venues, which determines to a great extent the politico-economic orientation and the subsequent policies adopted by such institutions, as exemplified in the case of the NDP.

Gellner and Waterbury use elements of the aforementioned Weberian approach. They offer a wide variety of contributions on patronage in theory and practice, with a special focus on Mediterranean societies. In the course of their writing, they provide an essential gist concerning some of the dominant theories that deal with patronage and political power. In doing so, Gellner and Waterbury display an overview of how patron-client structures acquire or lose their moral force, pinpointing the fact that patronage networks usually go through a continuous process of reformulation that alters the powerful/relevant patrons and clients, in accordance with the socioeconomic and political contexts prevalent at various junctures. This point is essential in our quest for analyzing the potential of sustaining patronage politics in Egypt post-Mubarak as we investigate the efficiency of these structures in maintaining the status quo of the regime.[31]

Sydel Silverman also draws attention to a methodological concern regarding the observation of patronage politics. "The problem is, firstly, a methodological one. On what grounds do we identify patterns in our data and call them patronage? Do we look at

[30] Robert Springborg and James Bill (2000) *Politics of The Middle East*. New York: Longman. p. 124-125.
[31] Ernest Gellner and John Waterbury (1977) *Patrons and Clients in Mediterranean Societies*. London: Duckworth; Hanover, NH: Center for Mediterranean Studies of the American Universities Field Staff

the behavior and the effects of action or do we ask people what they think is happening and how they feel about it? If we do both, is this a matter of summing up diverse kinds of information, or do we 'weight' them differently? And how do we handle discrepancies in different kinds of information?"[32] Silverman provides some responses to these queries, but ultimately asserts that dissecting the interaction between the public and the private affairs of individuals, and comprehending the attitudinal tendencies of people via the economic and political contexts of the state-society scope of interaction can help us establish a viable reflection on the origin of political patronage and how it capitalizes upon the already existing societal and cultural structures.

In the case of Egypt, patronage politics capitalized on some embedded tendencies in the cultural realm of most Egyptians, primarily the distrust of the ruling establishment/institution and the conviction that informalities and underground dealings are more efficient ways in addressing people's needs than government agencies. In practice such tendencies were also very pragmatic in nature, for, more often than not, informal networks were more beneficial to the majority of Egyptians than the 'formal' ones when it came to realizing economic or political objectives[33].

Looking at the Egyptian polity during Mubarak's rule, one finds that the tactics of patronage and consolidation of power were still dominant, shaping, to a large extent, the policy choices adopted by the Mubarak regime. Robert Springborg cites some of the most relevant factors that have influenced shaping the scope and magnitude of patronage tactics of the Egyptian president. The political elite and its role within the political economy, the newly arising bourgeoisie and the state, the military, the system of political

[32] Ibid
[33] Ibid, p.21.

control, and the secular and Islamist opposition to the regime are among the most relevant aspects that are tackled by Springborg as the main factors of concern pertaining to the Egyptian polity during the Mubarak era[34]. These are areas for acquiring power and authority, and the tactics that were used by Mubarak to consolidate his power were mostly dependent upon the changes in these arenas. Depending on field research conducted in Egypt, Springborg's analysis of the clientele networks in the military in particular offers a synopsis of the structure of this realm, especially during the Abu-Ghazala period that ended with his elimination from office in 1989.

Limitations of the Weberian Paradigm and Relevance of the Network Approach

Yet one has to put into consideration that there are certain limitations when it comes to the utilization of the Weberian approach in the context of the Middle Eastern polity. Ayubi says:

> Both the Marxist and the Weberian paradigms were tried for the study of Middle Eastern societies…but being basically western paradigms pertaining to capitalist societies, none of them has been found to be fully satisfactory…In pre-capitalist societies as well as in societies with articulated modes of production, one may find, first, that modes of production are very closely intertwined with modes of coercion and secondly- which is often related to the previous and which is particularly pronounced in the case of the Middle East- that modes of 'distribution' or of 'circulation' are just as important, if not more so, than modes of production.[35]

Thus, with a greater focus on modes of circulation, primarily of goods and services, as opposed to sheer production, Ayubi points out a meaningful limitation of the Weberian and other paradigms when it comes to analyzing Middle Eastern polities. Here, the

[34] Robert Springborg (1989) *Mubarak's Egypt: Fragmentation of the Political Order*. Colorado: Westview Press. p.iv
[35] Nazih Ayubi (1995) *Overstating The Arab State*. London: I. B. Tauris. p.175

emphasis on modes of circulation is also relevant to the purpose of this study as it highlights the importance of the role of the Lesser Notables, primarily perceived as the commercial agents and the intermediary middlemen that often come into play as the facilitators of such a process of circulation. Other scholars, such as Joel Migdal, have also criticized the Weberian approach, or at least the way it was utilized, in the context of state-society relations.

Migdal first offers a recap of the major schools of thought that dealt with state-society relations in the realm of social sciences in the 20th Century, specifically in the post World War II era. In the 1950's, Talcott Parsons and others pioneered what could be dubbed as a "social system approach", which pretty much stressed on the indispensable role of core societal values in shaping state structures. In the 1970's, Samuel Huntington and an array of other social scientists championed the essentiality of the institutional capacity of state structure. Seemingly, the main attention of these scholarly contributions has been dedicated to the quest for enhancing the exploitative capacity of the state, predominantly via consolidating and strengthening its authority.[36] Much of this scholarly contribution drew heavily upon a Weberian paradigm that places huge emphasis on an ideal model of the state as a conglomerate of foundational structures/institutions.

Yet the dilemma here arises, as outlined by Migdal, from the fact that, in actuality, it is the continuous process of struggle and negotiation between "state" and societal actors that should be the focus of attention if we are to analyze state-society relations:

> Weber's definition has the state firing on all cylinders, and, while he certainly did not mean the ideal type to be taken as the normal…that is precisely what has happened in subsequent scholarship. Of course, in real

[36] Joel Migdal (2001) *State in Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

> human society, no state can do all that an ideal-type state can…Tremendous variation has existed among states in the levelers that their leaders and officials have controlled in order to garner resources and to accomplish a skewed distribution of economic (and other) opportunities…If real states fell short of the standard…all sorts of words had to be invented to express the gap between actual…and the ideal. Terms such as corruption, weakness, and relative capacity implied that the ways things really worked were somehow exogenous to the normative model of what the state and its relations to the society are, or should be.[37]

Thus, there is more to the tale than the simple monopoly of power by the state. It seems that Weber's definition gave room for others to consider the ideal state as the one conducting "legitimate" violence, exercising power in a monopolistic manner. "The assumption that only the state does, or should, create rules and that only it does, or should, maintain the violent means to bend people to obey those rules minimizes and trivializes the rich negotiation, interaction, and resistance that occur in very human society among multiple systems of rule".[38] Indeed such a conceptualization of the state is not necessarily realistic, let alone conducive, when it comes to a fruitful understanding of state-society relations.

Instead Migdal, in conjunction with a variety of other scholars as well, propose a notion of a "state in society", mainly referring to the dynamism and the ongoing interaction between the official venues of the state structure and the popular/informal actors within the society. In this regard, Migdal seems to be playing along the same notes of the vibrant postulations of the state offered by scholars such as Michel Foucault and Henry Lefebvre. Foucault considered the modern state as the conglomerate of a spatial mold where individuals are plotted into slots with designated values, such as, for

[37] Ibid, p.14-15.
[38] Ibid.

instance, the appreciation of the concept of private property [39]in most of the Western liberal democratic states of today, or, similarly, the values of state-socialism in Eastern European states during the domination of the communist bloc.

Subsequently, two main aspects come to the forefront if we attempt to analyze the state in a manner that surpasses the sheer emphasis on the essentiality of state-institutions. First, the image of the state, which is signified in the outstanding physical /moral structures of greatness and elevation of the state: City halls, courts, ministries…etc. Then, second, there is the practice which is manifested in certain actions, usually channeled via certain actors or agencies:

> It must be thought of at once (1) as the powerful image of a clearly bounded, unified organization that can be spoken of in singular terms…as if it were a single, centrally motivated actor performing in an integrated manner to rule a clearly defined territory; and (2) as the practices of a heap of loosely connected parts or fragments, frequently with ill-defined boundaries between them and other groupings inside and outside the official state borders and often promoting conflicting sets of rules with one another and with the "official" Law. Theories that do not incorporate the two sides of the paradoxical state end up either over-idealizing its ability to turn rhetoric into effective policy or dismissing it as a grab-bag of everyman-out-for-himself, corrupt officials.[40]

A very similar conclusion is also drawn by Oskar Verkaiik who denotes, based upon the Pakistani popular culture, that distinguishing between the "state-idea" and the "state-system", and focusing on how the notion of bureaucratic state power can be used to legitimatize as well as discredit the works of the state apparatus, is quite relevant to the case of the popular conceptualization of the state in Pakistan.[41]

[39] Finn Stepputat (1997) "Politics of Displacement in Guatemala". *Journal of Historical Sociology*. Vol.12. No.1, p.55
[40] Joel Migdal (2001) *State in Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p.21-22.
[41] Oskar Verkaiik (2004) *Migrants and Militants*. Princeton University Pres. p.9

Along the same lines, regarding an alternative view of the state as an imbedded milieu that is interactive with the society, other contributors, such as Salwa Ismail, proposed a society-in-state model, in which improvisation prevails. Based upon observational accounts and extensive fieldwork in the popular urban quarters of Cairo, Ismail states, "The image of the state that emerges in the account of the market arrangements…underscores a mode of operation that is characterized by improvisation. It would be difficult to prescribe a unitary logic to how local government is managed on daily basis. By the same token, the proposition that there is a society that stands outside obscures the coalitions that bring "society in state" to reverse Migdal's (2001) proposition on "the state in society""[42]

The Network Approach

Logically speaking, the harsh emphasis on the bureaucratic institution/Weberian paradigm that swapped the academic realm in the post World War II era had to make its way through to the domain of policy making. For example, the neo-liberal model that was, and probably still is, championed by the Breton Woods institutions, the World Bank and the IMF, places great importance on a scheme of liberalization that views economic reform as a process that is dedicated to "dismantling economic arrangements that served the interests of political power holders, and replacing them with arrangements that reflected the "logic of economics". In this view, liberalization was seen as causing a shift from cronyism, patronage, and rent seeking to transparency, accountability, and well-defined property rights"[43]. Nonetheless, in reality, what took place throughout most of

[42] Salwa Ismail (2006) *Political Life in Cairo's New Quarter: Encountering The Everyday State*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. p.64.
[43] Steven Heydemann (2004) *Networks of Privilege in The Middle East*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. p.7

these "liberalization" schemes was a process of substitution of particular typologies of patronage for the benefit of others, yet under the umbrella of economic reform[44]. Here, Steven Heydemann states that it could be rather meaningful to utilize a 'network' approach, instead of depending solely on a rigid view of 'formal' institutions as the primary unit of analysis.

In fact, if we are attempting to dissect patron-client networks, or any other form of informal networks, a clear conceptualization of what is meant by networks is essential for starters. Wasserman and Galaskiewicz illustrate, "Instead of analyzing individual behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs, social network analysis focuses its attention on social entities or actors in interaction with one another and on how those interactions constitute a framework or structure that can be studied and analyzed in its own right"[45]. The aforementioned proposition is quite relevant in the course of this research as well, for it attempts to address the socioeconomic and political patron-client networks imbedded within the Egyptian society. For instance, as shall be displayed in Chapter IV, the network approach provides us with the opportunity to contextualize the relatively sizable set of socioeconomic and political networks instrumented by the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) in Egypt. Instead of focusing solely on the MB as the main unit of analysis pertaining to the sociopolitical phenomenon of Political Islam in Egypt, it is rather important to situate the project of the group within a larger state/society structure that

[44] Perhaps the Economic Reform & Structural Adjustment Program (ERSAP) of a country like Egypt is a case in a point, in which the upper echelons of the business community became empowered under the new realities to formulate a relatively new typology of patrons and clients in alliance with the governing regime. See Mohamed I. Fahmy (2005) "Gamal Mubarak & Egypt's Neo-Business Community". The Chronicles. Economic & Business History Research Center, The American University in Cairo, Vol 1, Issue 2, October 2005.

[45] Steven Heydemann (2004) *Networks of Privilege in The Middle East*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. p.25

contains an overarching web of socioeconomic and political patronage networks that are partially created and sustained by the MB.

So, provided that one succeeded in outlining the boundaries of particular networks in action, the dilemma still remains and it could be summed up as follows: How can such a configuration of networks be utilized in the context of a schematic, or put differently, macro-level analysis? As mentioned earlier, Nazih Ayubi and others have warned of the challenging nature of making the linkage between the micro and the macro levels of analysis. This is one of the most problematic issues of studying social phenomena such as patronage. Perhaps a potential solution could be offered, again, by Steven Heydemann:

> A central item on the network agenda is to bridge the gap between the micro-and the macro- order…One way that network analysis provides a "bridge" between the micro- and macro- orders is that successive levels are "embedded" in one another. Individual relational ties are the crucial components of dyads; dyads constitute triads; triads are contained in higher order sub-graphs; and all are embedded in complete networks…The beauty of the network analysis is that it allows a researcher to tie together so many interdependent parts that constitute micro- and macro- social orders.[46]

More often than not, and somehow by definition, social networks do exist in human groupings. In short, a social network is an amalgamation of human ties. Perhaps the study of some networks does not necessarily offer us compelling linkage with macro orders, for instance due to the geographical exclusivity or the regional nature of some social networks. Yet in the case of patronage politics, which we are interested in the course of this writing, the formulation offered by Heydemann, Wasermann, and Galaskiewicz, among others, seems to be quite useful and potentially beneficial. This is due to the fact that networks of political patronage, as will be argued later in this study, do pose an interesting amalgamation of relationships that require a certain set of vertical

[46] Ibid, p.27.

as well as horizontal linkages to, firstly, exist, then, survive. As a matter of fact, the preliminary definition of patron-client networks that was given earlier in this chapter interestingly overlaps with the conceptualization of networks as pivoted by Wasermann and Galaskiewicz in the previously cited quotation.

Second Generation of Analysts: Contextualizing Patrons and Clients within State-Society Relations

It could be argued that the contributions of James Scott and Joel Migdal opened the door for a second generation of analysts that are concerned with informal networks and politics to emerge, tackling the issue from an alternative point of view. If we tentatively place the works of John Waterbury, H.C. Moore, and Robert Springborg, among others- whose contributions were quite meaningful and indeed illuminating in shedding light on several elements of political patronage in the Middle East- within a categorical first generation of analysts dealing with the conceptualization of patron-client networks, then the following could be probably classified as the second generation. First, taking a look at a variety of scholars that tackled the issue of informal politics in the context of state-society interaction in different regions over the globe is beneficial, if we are to sketch a generic synopsis of patronage politics. Then, moving on to the specificities of the Middle East, a closer scrutiny of the scholarly contributions pertaining to the Middle East shall be also displayed.

Contextualizing it all: How Do we Link Patrons and Clients to State-Society Relations?

As mentioned earlier, viewing the state as a multifaceted actor that intersects with the society on a wide variety of echelons helps in shedding light on the pervasiveness and

the important role played by informal networks. More often than not, these networks operate as interlocutors between these two entities, or concepts if you will.

To begin with, a primary issue regarding any perspective on state-society interaction is indeed the concept of "sovereignty" and how it is perceived and practiced within a polity. Thomas Hansen and Finn Stepputat argue that, in actuality, state sovereignty is not as solid and well-defined as considered by most, and perhaps it never was. "The state finds itself in constant competition with other centers of sovereignty that dispense violence as well as justice with impunity – criminal gangs, political movements or quasi-autonomous police forces that each try to assert their claims to sovereignty. In such situations, the state is not the natural and self-evident center and origin of sovereignty, but one among several sovereign bodies that tries to assert itself".[47]The findings postulated by Hansen and Stepputat were predominantly derived from a body of research dealing with various developing and developed countries, including the quasi-state of Northern Cyprus, Malaysia, China, India, and South Africa. For example, Hansen and Stepputat assert that "the shock and feelings of vulnerability vis-à-vis the huge but strangely anonymous forces of global finance capital are palpable in countries like India and South Africa that until the early 1990's had sheltered their economies behind high tariffs and heavily interventionist economic regimes".[48]

Sovereignty then becomes an arena of contestation, and societal/ informal actors also tend to develop their own scheme of sovereignty. For instance:

> Exploration of "repertoires of authority" in urban India…demonstrates that those who define and wield informal sovereignty often are accomplished business people, activists, local politicians, as well as

[47] Thomas Blom Hansen and Finn Stepputat (2005) *Sovereign Bodies*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, p.36
[48] Ibid, p.32

> criminal figures. They have managed to capture, privatize or make semi-autonomous territories, institutions, identity forms, and practices in the interstices of the fragmented configuration of sovereign power in the modern city- spaces. India's dynamic democracy has enabled these men to present themselves as populist heroes, representing manly virtues (*mard*) and defending neighborhoods and community life. J.F Bayart captures a similar phenomenon in Africa in the ubiquitous "trickster" as an enduring cultural model of the daring, creative, and highly mobile individual – physically and socially – who may end up as a respected businessman or political figure.[49]

Interestingly, a seeming resemblance could be traced between the figures of "*mard*" in India and the "trickster" in Africa and that of the "*futuwwa*" on the Arab street. Such figures are apparently historical and somehow present in the social/cultural paradigms of the various populaces, yet versatile enough to reshape and adapt to the realities of the modern-day polity.[50]

John Sidel also introduces a persona of a local strongman with similar features as he dissects the characteristics of "bossism" in Southeast Asia, with particular focus on the case of the districts of Cavite and Cebu in The Philippines. Acknowledging the analytical potency of the concept of patronage with regard to comprehending the machinations of informal politics in the provinces of The Philippines, Sidel yet notes that there is more to the concept of "bossism" than the cooptation and endowment of resources that are usually prevalent with patronage politics. Coercion also plays a role in the tactics implemented by the bosses. "Local politicians in the Philippines have indeed maintained patron-client relationships, but they have also long relied heavily upon vote-buying, fraud, intimidation, and violence to win elections. In localities where bosses succeed…monopoly over coercive means, access to scarce resources and state office also

[49] Ibid, p.31
[50] See also Ismail (2006) on the *beyetakabarlu* figure and the mixture of pragmatic/moral authorities he possesses within Cairo's popular neighborhoods.

seriously compromise the terms of exchange that lively electoral competition is assumed to dictate to patrons in need of loyal client supporters".[51]

And, despite the fact that Sidel argues that the cases of provincial politics which he examined in The Philippines are not necessarily representative of the entirety of a complicated polity as such, he still states that several similarities do exist with the way analogous strongmen operate within the polity of The Philippines and elsewhere in Southeast Asia at large. Some of these strongmen are state-based; some are exposed to coercion and get no private economic benefit; and others do in fact establish their own economic dynasties. Similar typologies exist with relative variations in countries like Burma, Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia.[52]

Therefore, with an array of divergences in the scope and magnitude of this phenomenon of 'bossism' in those South Asian localities, a sketch of various analogous features could be still drawn:

> Bosses have emerged and entrenched themselves when and where the commanding heights of the local political economy have lent themselves to monopolistic control. Insofar as such monopolistic control over the local economy has hinged on state-based derivative and discretionary powers, bosses have depended heavily upon super-ordinate power brokers, whose backing has underpinned their emergence, entrenchment, and survival, and whose hostility has spelled their downfall or death. Insofar as control over the local economy has rested upon a solid base in proprietary wealth outside the purview of state intervention…bosses have withstood the hostile machinations of super-ordinate power brokers and successfully passed on their empires to successive generations in dynasty form.[53]

Overall, Sidel's analysis draws one's attention to a few important pointers concerning patron-client networks and informal polities in general. Importantly, the degree of

[51] John Sidel (1997) Philippine Politics in Town, District, And Province. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol.56, No.4 p.961
[52] Ibid, p.962-963
[53] Ibid.

reciprocity that exists within a patron-client relationship and, consequently, whether such a relationship could be signified as a patron-client bond or a variation of that seems to be an essential theme in his writing.

Patron-client networks, as displayed earlier in this study, are mainly established upon a notion of mutual benefit and exchange of resources from the patron, possibly financial, administrative, or other typologies of resources, for political support and loyalty on the part of the client. However, and by nature of a mostly vertical relationship between agents with varying degrees of power and capacity, reciprocity is not always guaranteed and it depends pretty much on the supply and demand of available patrons and clients. For example, the bargaining power of a certain patron could vary if there are several patrons that are competing for a particular/limited group of clients, and vice versa. Logically, if there is only a limited supply of patrons that could provide a certain service or exploit a specific set of resources, then the power they hold as opposed to their respective clients will be quite sizable, and the room for exercising such power by manipulating the client will increase. Here, the shades between cooption and coercion get somewhat blurry and difficult to distinguish.

As a matter of fact, any attempt to contextualize patrons and clients, or any other sort of societal forces within a particular polity, has to take into consideration the element of "space", introduced earlier by scholars as Foucault and Lefebvre. In his study of Guatemala, Finn Stepputat says that, in the case of displaced Guatemalans, new forms of political transformation and identity have erupted which are directly linked to the politics of space. For example, displaced Guatemalans in Mexico succeeded in establishing a variety of alternative governing bodies to channel their demands, representing thousands

of displaced people.[54] This tactic again resembles other occurrences in a multiplicity of polities where the space confined by the community is somehow out of the reach of the official/formal venues of the state apparatus.[55]

Along the same lines, Asef Bayat speaks of a certain notion of 'street politics' that is mainly derived from the daily interaction of societal forces on the streets in a plethora of so called "Third World" polities. Based on research conducted in Iran, South Korea, and the Latin American cases of Chile and Brazil, Bayat describes such politics as:

> A set of conflicts and the attendant implications between a collective populace and the authorities, shaped and expressed episodically in the physical and social space of the 'streets'- from the alleyways to the more visible pavements, public parks or sports areas. The 'street' in this sense serves as the only locus of collective expression for, but by no means limited to, those who structurally lack any institutional setting to express discontent.[56]

Bayat reckons that, within this milieu of street politics, social networks do exist and are mostly passive, but potentially active. An essential element in shaping such street politics is "the operation of what I have called the *passive network* among the people who use public space. Any collective political act -mobilization- requires some degree of organization, communication and networking among actors. For the most part, this is constituted deliberately either formally or informally''.[57]

Hence atomized yet common individuals exist in street politics with shared goals and objectives, and are very possibly mobilized for joint action. The degree and frequency of such mobilization varies of course depending upon the socio-economic

[54] Finn Stepputat (1997) Politics of Displacement in Guatemala. *Journal of Historical Sociology*. Vol.12. No.1. p.70
[55] See also Ismail (2006) on the emergence of *Majalis El Tahkim*, or councils of arbitration, in Cairo's urban quarters.
[56] Asef Bayat (1997) Un-civil Society: The Politics of The Informal People. *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 18. No.1. p.63
[57] Ibid, p.64

context they prevail within. The interaction between these networks and the state apparatus is, usually, a very complicated process that varies, again, in accordance with the context pertaining. Bayat proceeds, "states may be able to restrict deliberately organized demonstrations or rallies; they are often incapable of prohibiting street populations from working, driving or walking – in short, from street life. The more open and visible the public place, the broader the operation of passive networks and therefore the wider the possibility of collective action becomes".[58] Indeed what is described by Bayat as "street politics" is quite applicable to the case of urban quarters of Cairo and elsewhere, where such networks are arguably active and effective in accomplishing the economic, and sometimes political, needs of the populace, or the *sha'b* as portrayed earlier and illustrated later also in the course of this study by Singerman and Ismail.

Along with street politics, comes also a notion of street/popular "culture". Several analysts noted the fact that informal politics are actually the product of/the producer of a wide array of attitudinal and conceptual tendencies. For example, Oskkar Verkaiik who, based on fieldwork that focuses on the Muhajir social movement (MQM) in the popular neighborhoods of Pakistan, draws a vivid image of the street culture of modern-day Pakistan and how it is echoed in the ethos and dynamics of this movement. A variety of factors come into play when it comes to the context within which such features are formulated, and, more recently, the forces of globalization catapulted via a plethora of actors, from the mass media to the international economic institutions, has become one of these decisive factors:

> A picture of street culture emerges that is more violent, less organized, more racially and ethnically biased, and more excluded from mainstream society than early-modern working-class culture…such a street culture is

[58] Ibid, p.66

> "a complex and conflictual web of beliefs, symbols, modes of interaction, values, and ideologies that have emerged in opposition to exclusion from mainstream society." It is "not a coherent, conscious universe of political opposition but, rather, a spontaneous set of rebellious practices that in the long term have emerged as an oppositional style…The homogenizing tendencies in the field of economics, international politics, and mass media do not necessarily lead to an uniformization in cultural styles and expressions. They instead intensify the production of locality and local identity in cultural terms [59]

In fact this portrayal also resonates with other sketches of popular culture in several spheres in the developing world. Again, Diane Singerman's illustration of the attitudinal tendencies of the *sha`b* or the common people of Cairo's popular quarters is a good exemplar. [60]

So, with the continuous erosion in the state's capacity, the distrust of the state within inner-city areas increases with "state power abuse, human rights violation, extra-judicial persecution, and the omnipresence of secret intelligence services…the public imagines itself increasingly in opposition to a state captured by corrupt politicians. This opposition between a fragmenting, corrupt state and the nation calling for the rule of law helps explain the public support for a "politics beyond politics"".[61] Whether it is in the shape of ethnic purity, an Islamic revolution, or even, as sometimes catapulted by the military when portraying itself as the only institution capable of establishing order and integrity, a military takeover, as was illustrated in the case of Pakistan in 1997, this denotation of "politics beyond politics" is quite palpable. Again similar occurrences have taken place in the popular quarters of a wide variety of developing countries regarding an alternative sort of politics, separate and distinguished from the mainstream venues of politics.

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[59] Oskar Verkaiik (2004) *Migrants and Militants.* Princeton University Pres. p.7
[60] Diane Singerman (1995) *Avenues of Participation*. Princeton University Press.
[61] Oskar Verkaiik (2004*) Migrants and Militants*. Princeton University Press. p.9

Overall, the abovementioned contributions aim at revisiting the modes of state-society interaction in various polities, emphasizing the increasingly important role played by patrons/clients. With the incremental retreat of the formal/official state-apparatus, there was an inevitable enhancement in the prowess of a variety of societal actors on the street level. Several versions of what could be described as patronized notables appeared, and in certain cases reemerged, as pivotal political forces. The agency of these key-players is closely linked to the politico-economic roles ascribed to them. Whether it is the bosses of Southeast Asia, the tricksters in South Africa, or the reemerging Arab *futuwas*, the capacity to have access to and circulate resources among potential incumbents has been a main determinant in shaping the scope and magnitude of political agency, enjoyed by these neo-notables.

Finally, before moving on to the particular contributions regarding informal networks and patronage politics in the Middle Eastern region, first, some light has to be shed on the notion of democratization and its role in enhancing development via battling corruption. In this case, consider patron-client networks in the bureaucracy, for instance, as the form of corruption that is to be battled. The problem here resides in the fact that, in most of the developing countries that are usually targeted with the process of democratization, patron-client networks are embedded within a grassroots level that exceeds the sheer façade of the bureaucracy. This raises many questions on the relevance of the typical arguments made for the potential economic benefits of democracy in such countries. In line with what was reiterated earlier in this writing regarding the negligible effect that the neo-liberal policies of institutionalization and reform had on imbedded patron-client bonds, economists such as Mushtaq Khan say that there are, in practice,

powerful structural reasons why this is not likely to happen: "Economic characteristics of developing countries make patron–client politics both rational for redistributive coalitions and effective as strategies for achieving the goals of powerful constituencies within these coalitions …The organization of personalized patron-client factions is driven not by the absence of democracy but, rather, by the structural features of the economies of developing countries that make modern welfare driven redistributive politics unviable"[62].

Enter the Middle East: Patronage politics in a different light?

Cited earlier in this writing, in the context of outlining the essential role played by informal political networks as alternative venues of political participation, Diane Singerman can be considered as one of the main contributors that tackled the issue of informal networks in Middle Eastern societies. Singerman belongs to a second generation of Middle East scholars who attempted to shift the focus that characterized the majority of scholarly contributions on Middle East politics from sheer elitist politics to a consideration of the popular forces of the *sha`b* or the common people. She suggests that political patronage/clientelism operates on a level that is rather different from what is conventionally suggested in the realm of social science research:

> The party itself functions in a clientelistic manner, providing services and "the spoils of the system" to faithful party supporters in exchange for vote and loyal support. "Party-directed patronage is typically directed to 'entire categories, coalitions of interests, groups of employees,'…and consists of 'mass favors' granted no longer at the administrative level alone but also at the legislative level". Machine politics operate in a similar fashion, where politicians succeed in "privatizing" public goods, "that is, by using the immense resources of the state for purposes of private, productive generosity". Yet networks can be a vehicle for those who are not supported by the immense resources of the state, to protect and further

[62] Mushtaq Khan (2005) Markets, States, & Development: Patron-Client Networks And the Case For Democracy in Developing Countries. *Democratization*. Vol.2. No.5. p.704-721

> their interests in a more subtle, subterranean way, without attracting the notice of the state.[63]

Here, Singerman points out to the important role of horizontal/reciprocal networks in shaping the machinations of the *sha`bi*, or popular, polity of Cairo. These networks in fact serve and provide for the Egyptian populace a huge array of needs: employment, health care and educational facilities, among other services of course.

The role of informal networks in managing the affairs of various Middle-Eastern polities was also emphasized by analysts such as Janine Clark who, based upon work in Jordan, Yemen and Egypt asserts that the prevalence of such networks is one of the most valid reasons for the rise of Islamist politics in these countries. Adopting a committed social-movement-theory approach, Clark focuses on the networks perpetuated by Islamic Social Institutions (ISI), describing them as "middle-class networks bringing Islamists and non-Islamists together…expanded and strengthened via ISIs"[64]. Clark also cites that, from her findings, moderate Islamism, such as that of the Muslim Brotherhood, seems to be a "movement of the marginalized, educated middle class"[65]. However, this note is not quite revealing, mainly because of the extreme heterogeneity of Cairo's "educated middle class".

Apart from the relatively blurry distinctions that shade this particular "class" in most of the polities of the developing countries, one notes that already within this Cairene middle class there is the urban upper-middle class, the lower middle class, in addition to other sub-classifications as well. These classifications are usually rendered depending upon a plethora of factors that determine the level of the social and cultural capital

[63] Diane Singerman (1995) *Avenues of Participation*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press. p.136
[64] Janine Clark (2004) Social Movement Theory & Patron-Clientelism: Islamic Social Institutions & The Middle Class in Egypt, Jordan, & Yemen. *Comparative Political Studies*. Vol.37.No.8 October. p.941
[65] Ibid.

enjoyed by the person. These factors include the type of the job occupied, the educational background, the level of income, and, most of the time, the place of residence of the household:

> Middle classes in developing countries consist of a collection of classes that can collectively be described as the 'intermediate' classes. Political entrepreneurs from different sections of the intermediate classes are unlikely to share common interests or to be constrained by the fate of the capitalist sector. The only viable redistributive strategy for developing country political entrepreneurs in the absence of any fiscal or regulatory space is to organize enough organizational muscle to be able to capture resources through a combination of fiscal, off-budget and even illegal means. The intermediate classes include the educated classes with college or university education, the petty bourgeoisie…[66]

Being a primary focus in the context of this writing when it comes to informal networks and clientelist tendencies, it is safe to assume that, as echoed earlier by Ben Nefissa and others, patron-client relations are quite potent and relevant to the machinations of the Muslim Brotherhood, as well as the National Democratic Party (NDP).

Commenting on what she views as a deficient approach in tackling the issue of patronage politics, Singerman says, "Not merely embodiments of exploitative patron-client relations, informal networks can be more accurately characterized by Lomintz's notion of "reciprocity networks"…In Cairo networks provide not only economic but political security. An understanding of networks as both a political resource and a political institution for the *sha`b* moves beyond the negative connotations surrounding clientelism".[67] Thus, in short, although political patronage does exist, perceiving it as a main explanatory tool, disregarding the reciprocal nature of informal networks which

[66] Mushtaq Khan (2005) Markets, States, & Development: Patron-Client Networks And the Case For Democracy in Developing Countries. *Democratization*. Vol2. No.5. p.718
[67] Diane Singerman (1995) *Avenues of Participation*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. p.136

predominates, for example, in the popular quarters of Cairo, will surely be misleading in any attempt towards comprehending the Egyptian polity.

What I shall try to convey in the context of this writing, however, is the observation that these two aspects, the horizontal networks and the vertical patron-client bonds, both exist within the Egyptian polity and that they are not actually mutually exclusive but rather interconnected. As a matter of fact, one could argue that vertical and horizontal networks, more often than not, do collude and interact on all echelons of the Egyptian polity.[68] If patron-client relations assume a "vertical" notion of a hierarchical allocation of resources from patron to client/s, their survival and dispensary nature can not be maintained without the presence of effective "horizontal" networks that are pervasive enough to cut across various individuals, communities and socioeconomic classes. For example, the existence of particular patrons and respective clients within a certain state bureaucracy, may it be a party, a ministry, or an educational institution, is usually associated with the presence of informal horizontal networks, or *shillal* in the case of Egypt, where the allocations are disbursed horizontally. The Egyptian polity, with its lesser notables arising in the popular quarters of Cairo, is perhaps a case in point.

Salwa Ismail dissects the emergence, or rather re-emergence, of the Lesser Notables in the popular quarters of Cairo. The informal communities of Cairo constitute a bulk of the areas tested by Ismail, and, in a study dealing with the patterns of interaction in Cairo's informal communities; she traces the development of a particular form of patron-client networks, namely those relations that erupt between the old and new settlers

[68]See Mohamed Ibrahim Fahmy (2005) "Patrons & Clients in Mubarak's Egypt [Manuscript]: The Military, The NDP, & The 21st Century". The American University in Cairo; for an exemplar of vertical/ horizontal schematic overview of patronage politics within the Egyptian polity, with a special focus on the higher echelons of the NDP and the Egyptian military.

of these communities. "Clientelistic relations exist between early settlers and followers and between "contractors" and small buyers. They also exist between residents and powerful figures from outside the community, who are involved in appropriating large plots of land".[69]

Another figure presented also by Ismail in later contributions on the Egyptian polity is that of the "*biytakabrluh*", a figure introduced earlier in the course of this research. In fact, the interesting thing about such a figure is that it is quite widespread and perhaps even celebrated within the Egyptian popular culture, yet rarely presented or displayed as a viable social and political actor in the literature pertaining to the Middle East. The lesser notabilities of Cairo's popular neighborhoods as outlined by Ismail are mostly "real estate contractors, workshop owners, and wholesale-retail merchants. In other words they come from a social stratum whose ranks have expanded with the economic liberalization and privatization policies. The trajectories of those…share some common socioeconomic features. Some belong to merchant families that have been in business for two or three generations"[70].

Again, Singerman tells us of an interesting story that catapults the machinations of this typology of lesser patrons. Although the figure cited here as the "patron" is in fact a politician, he still belongs to a lower echelon of notability that is rather immersed in the neighborhoods of the *sha`bi* communities:

> The ties between the "patron" and the supposed "client" were very close and reciprocal. The "client" received loans from the politician, gifts of food and clothing for her family, publicly subsidized apartments, employment for her and members of her family, assistance with

[69] Salwa Ismail (1996) The Politics of Space in Urban Cairo: Informal Communities and The State. *Arab Studies Journal*. Fall 1996. p.123
[70] Salwa Ismail (2006) *Political Life in Cairo's New Quarters*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. p.49.

> bureaucratic problems and a great deal of information and knowledge which the "client" then utilized to support her personal and familial networks. Through this relationship, the "client" developed a powerful base within the community, building on her family's already strong ties to the merchant community. At election time, the client returned these services by organizing the election campaign and marshaling local political support in the district. This relationship was extremely well publicized and promoted by both the politician and the local leader.[71]

In a sense, this tale reemphasizes the fact that, within Cairo's popular quarters, and as asserted earlier, vertical patron-clientelism seems to be operating in conjunction with horizontal networks.

Placing patron-client networks of political entrepreneurship within the social structure, Khan states that "Pyramidal patron-client networks are then likely to emerge as the most rational form of organization for faction leaders at all levels of the social structure. Faction leaders promise rewards to their clients based on their organizational support, who in turn mobilize those below them, all the way down to foot soldiers who may only be mobilized during elections, strikes, riots, and other political events".[72] Indeed this pyramidal web is utilized by the Lesser Notables who, in turn, reproduce their notability in accordance with the resources at their disposal.

One of the main objectives of this research is to build upon the contribution of the aforementioned second generation of analysts who called for an alternative perception regarding the dynamics of informal networks in general. The special focus of this study, being the lesser notabilities of the Egyptian polity during Mubarak's era in specific, renders some attention to the postulations of those who dealt with the informal networks of Egyptian politics in the ascent of the 21st Century. These contributions seem to offer a

[71] Diane Singerman (1995) *Avenues of Participation*. Princeton University Press, p.170-171
[72] Mushtaq Khan (2005) "Markets, States, & Development: Patron-Client Networks And the Case For Democracy in Developing Countries". *Democratization*. Vol.l2. No.5. p.719

sketch of a particular political agency, that of the lesser patrons, which is still in the making. As stated by Ismail, "The political agency of the Lesser Notables is in the process of forming, and we need to pay attention to their modes of action, alliances, and allegiances [and] the politics of the lesser notables and the possible directions that their implication in local and national politics may take"[73].

Methodology

For the purpose of this research, verification and authenticity of resources shall be a chief concern due to the usage of a multitude of primary sources, largely interviews and personal accounts. In *Egypt: The Stalled Society*, Hamied Ansari presents a few pointers regarding this aspect. The author mainly deals with the sociopolitical diagnosis of the state-structure in the post 1952 regime through the investigation of agricultural patterns and the role of the rural sector within the state. This writing is crucial for the aim of the study at hand, as it provides a scope of methodological tools that are used by the author in collecting data pertaining to the relationship between the agrarian bourgeoisie and the Egyptian state. Ansari's strategy of verification of information, which basically depends on the contextualization of the primary sources in accordance with the realities of the time and place subject to investigation, is a methodological tool that shall be followed in the course of this research.[74] Hamied Ansari categorically states the difficulties faced upon collecting data due to the highly informal nature of the structures dealt with in the case study of the village of Kamshish[75] around which the focus of his

[73] Salwa Ismail (2006) *Political Life in Cairo's New Quarter: Encountering The Everyday State*. Minneapolis. University of Minnesota Press. p.64.
[74] Hamied Ansari (1986) *Egypt, the Stalled Society*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
[75] Ibid.

book revolves. Access to primary sources, mainly direct interviews with villagers and officials, formulated a basic pool of information that was utilized by the author, a technique that shall be attempted in the course of this dissertation as well.

In the course of this study I have conducted fieldwork in the areas of Cairo's popular urban quarters (*Al-Ahiaa'Al Shae`bya*) in order to trace the socioeconomic and political dynamics of lesser notabilities within the lower echelons of the Egyptian polity. My particular focus is on the area of Misr Al Qadima (Old Cairo), which is arguably the oldest residential quarter in contemporary Cairo. The selection of this particular area rests on two main factors; the first of them being the surveys and statistics available on the scope and magnitude of political mobilization and participation in Cairo's popular quarters; through data on party membership, voter turnout…etc. Some of this information was made available via the Central Authority for Population Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS) and Al Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies.

The second factor of course rests on the plausibility of conducting fieldwork and research in such an area. I initially aimed at pinpointing seven or eight areas or quarters that could be viable exemplars for Cairo's popular communities, with the intention to focus on two or three of them afterwards, depending on the availability of informants and middlemen that could act as linkages to such quarters. Eventually, Misr Al Qadima's two main quarters (the relatively recently-constructed 'Ain Al Sirra and the older quarter of Misr Al Qadima proper) were the popular areas that I tended to focus upon in this study as will be outlined in the upcoming chapter. In the context of the field research, the role of informant which was highlighted in similar areas of research by Verkaiik, Ismail, and Singerman was crucial, for he/she is likely to function as the link and facilitator of the

transfusion of information between the researcher and the area within he/she operates. In conducting my fieldwork, I primarily depended on what is usually referred to as 'snowball sampling', which is mainly a process that depends on utilizing the sources of information available as they come across from the respondents pertaining. Existing respondents were able to put me in contact with their circles of acquaintances, and these circles were also useful in order for the researcher to connect with other circles and so forth. Then open-ended interviews that allow for the respondent/s the room to talk relatively openly with a considerable degree of ease, and without a specifically prescribed topic of discussion, were also utilized. This was pivotal in order to allow more ease and fluidity when it comes to expressing a viewpoint or telling a certain story that might be of relevance. The mission of the researcher, then, becomes one of assessment and analysis of information, depending on the interest of the researcher of concern. This is actually quite resonant to an oral history approach, which attempts to generate research areas and foci depending, as much as possible, on the raw/uninterrupted narratives of respondents.[76]

However, here I also tended to utilize a participant/observant approach[77] that allows one to take part in the interactive dealings of the populace or the researched and, at the same time, also observe/monitor the way these dealings operate and the information that is infiltrating through. Again, this approach could be beneficial for the researcher because, primarily, being solely perceived as an outsider that is alienated from the area you are studying could potentially hinder the openness and connectivity that the people of such areas receive a person with, especially in a comparatively intimate

[76] Wael M. Ismail (2006) "Demystifying The Fog: Oral History & Structural Analysis". *The Chronicle*s. Economic & Business History Research Center, The American University in Cairo, Vol.2. Issue.1, July-September 2006.
[77] Diane Singerman (1995) *Avenues of Participation*. Princeton University Press. p. 18

socioeconomic/cultural setting such as that of Cairo. Despite the fact that I have been a resident of Cairo for most of my life, and that I could subsequently claim to have some fair knowledge of a number of its quarters, the truth remains that in order for me to undertake the kind of research outlined here, this factor could only be a bonus that sure required a lot of additional fieldwork and research to build upon. After sketching a prospective set of features for the 'Lesser Notable' in Chapter II, I shall present, in Chapter III, an overview of Misr Al Qadima as a popular polity. Chapters IV and V deal with the sociopolitical agency of the lesser notabilities and their affiliations with the MB and the NDP, in an attempt to scrutinize the scope and magnitude of the role played by the lesser notabilities in the Misr Al Qadima area. Finally, Chapter VI shall display a set of conclusions and findings relating to the current/prospective politico-economic roles of the lesser notables in the Egyptian polity at large.

Chapter II: Who are the Lesser Notables? Historical Background and Modes of Production and Circulation, Affiliations, and Political Roles

This chapter aims at outlining some of the features of what could be dubbed as a typology of notables within the pre-modern Middle Eastern/Muslim society, with special focus on the Mamluk and Ottoman periods, venturing then into displaying some of the features of the Lesser Notables of Cairo today. In doing so, it does not attempt to draw direct and necessary linkages between the notables of the Mamluk and the Ottoman eras and those of today. Given the remarkably different socioeconomic, political and historical contexts, such an exercise could be of minimal benefit. Instead, the point is to trace some examples of the usage of the term "notables" in the literature on the Middle East and portray the implications they bear pertaining to the socioeconomic and political roles ascribed to those notables, within the urban as well as the rural milieus. Along that process, striking similarities as well as crystal-clear differences between the category of the Middle Eastern notability in the past and its contemporary counterpart shall become rather clear.

The Muslim City

Perhaps a glimpse of the Islamic city during the early caliphates of the Umayyads and Abbasids is important, if we are to sketch out some of the common features of urban life at the time. Arguably, the mechanisms by which the Muslim city came into being resemble, in essence, those that led to the construction of most civic conglomerates in the medieval period. "The village needed the town; but the town could not exist without the food produced by the peasant and delivered to the urban market, whether for sale or in payment of taxes. The basic unit of Near Eastern society was the "agro-city", the urban

conglomeration together with the rural hinterland from which it drew its food and to which it sold part at least of its manufactures."[78]

Indeed, a plethora of scholars have suggested that there emerged a certain set of commonalities amongst various Middle Eastern cities with the ascent of Islam. For example, based upon extensive study of North Africa, George and William Marcais noted that the shape of the Islamic city was determined only in part by the exigencies of power, determining where and how the citadel, the city walls, and the gates are placed, for instance. Yet in part the character of the city was also largely influenced by being Islamic or, in other words, by constituting an essential aspect of the Islamic caliphate. "The congregational mosque in the center of the city, the religious schools beneath its shadow, the hierarchy of *suqs*…the residential quarters with their ethnic or religious solidarity, the cemeteries and shrines of saints outside the walls: all these, they suggested, existed and were where they were because the city was a Muslim city"[79].

The religious/ethnic distribution of quarters was evident in medieval Muslim cities. Taking the example of Damascus, Ira Lapidus states that the quarters in practice reflected a sense of communal homogeneity. "Jews and Christians, and the various sorts of each, had their own districts. Among the Muslims different ethnic groups- Arabs, Kurds, Turkomans- lived apart. So too in the Arab Muslim majority, population affiliation with the different Muslim schools of law was the basis for district quarters, as were common or presumed ancestry, clan ties, or common village origin".[80] There was also a socioeconomic basis for the division of quarters. Some of them were based on the

[78] Albert Hourani. (1970) *The Islamic City: A Colloquium*. Oxford: Bruno Cassirer. p. 16
[79] Ibid, p.12
[80] Ibid, p.197

clienteles of notable families and others were specialized in certain economic activities, such as, tanning, weaving and other manufactures as well. "Basically they were whole communities made up of notables and commoners both, rich and poor".[81]

Going somehow further, other historians, such as Massignon, stated that there was also an evident socioeconomic dimension that played a role in the physical and moral construction of the Muslim city. This is catapulted via the mounting importance of the professional corporations or guilds. The guild in fact acted as "a convenient vehicle of control by the state over professional and social activities in the city".[82]

> There was one type of socio-religious institution above all which dominated the life of the Islamic city: The professional corporation or guild, going back beyond Islamic times into the Sasanian empire, encouraged by the Ismai'lis, having a religious basis and sanction expressed by the in rites of initiation and the cult of patron saints. Such corporations created within the framework of *turuq*, the brotherhoods of mystics, provided the basis of urban society in the Muslim world: of solidarity between man and man, and of individual self-respect, the craftsman's belief in the worth of his own labor.[83]

Hence, in the eyes of Massignon, the urban Muslim society was predominantly corporate. "Urban Muslims had some special power of organizing themselves, maintaining their communal existence in the face of political power".[84]

The Guilds

The example of the political relevance of the commercial guilds could be viewed as one of the early manifestations of a commercial-political relationship within the milieu of the medieval Muslim City. However, other historians noted that this corporate nature of guilds within the Muslim city was not as predominant as reckoned by Massignon.

[81] Ibid.
[82] Nazih Ayubi (1995) *Overstating The Arab State*. London: I. B. Tauris. p.76
[83] Albert Hourani (1970) *The Islamic City: A Colloquium*. Oxford: Bruno Cassirer. p.12
[84] Ibid, p.13

According to this line of thought championed by C. Cahen and S. M. Stern among others, the guilds of the early Muslim city were not actually guilds in the medieval European sense. These guilds, "insofar as they existed, were instruments of state control. It was only at a late period that they acquired a life of their own…Here we may ask whether even the guilds of the Ottoman times had so much of an independent life as we may be tempted to think. Except in a few specialized cases, did they exist in a fully articulated and autonomous form"[85] Overall, there seems to be a disagreement among historians with regard to the scope and magnitude of the political role played by those commercial agents at the time; however they mostly cite that regardless of the size of that role, it still existed.

As stated earlier, it is highly likely that associational professional institutions that already existed prior to the Muslim conquest of the Middle East have made their way through onto the period of the Islamic caliphates. This trend also continued with the beginning of the age of the smaller Muslim states/dynasties. The earliest records marking the presence of a guild system in the medieval Middle East date back to the twelfth century. These earliest texts were the references "in twelfth century treatises of the *hisba* both in the East and in Spain to foremen of trades"[86]. These foremen were responsible for ensuring that the tradesmen under them would carry out the *muhtasib's* orders. "Similar Evidence is also forthcoming from the Mamluk period…The role of the foremen, as assistants of the various delegates of the government, is a constant factor in the history of the organization of the crafts and trades in Islam".[87]

[85] Ibid, p.14
[86] Ibid
[87] Ibid, p.44

The guild system has nonetheless witnessed various phases of rise and fall that somehow coincided with the politico-economic policies of the Muslims dynasties prevalent during the lifetime of the guilds. In practice, the ascent of the guild-system was associated with the rise of the role of the artisans as viable economic actors in the milieu of the Muslim city. With the "decline in conquests and in the recruitment of Arabs into the army, growing numbers of Arabs started to move into the productive sectors."[88] Hourani states that:

> Under the Sunni rule, the guilds were persecuted, submitted to a thousand restrictions, deprived of any legal rights. There was a legal functionary, the *muhtasib*, whose main duty was to supervise the guilds and to nip in the bud any attempt at independent action…Quite different was the position of the guilds under the Fatimids, where they enjoyed great prosperity. Recognized by the state, they seem to have possessed considerable privileges, and to have played an important part in the commercial revival that took place under Fatimid rule. It was the Fatimids that founded the guild of teachers which formed the great university of Al-Azhar…In 1171, Fatimid anti-Caliphate was destroyed by Saladin…Immediately the guilds were submitted to a very strict control.[89]

Here, it is noteworthy that other medieval historians would doubt that the degree of control exercised by the Muslim state varied a great deal when comparing the policies of the Sunni states as opposed to the Shiite ones. However, there seems to be a sense of agreement that, regardless of the particular Muslim state that reigned supreme, the role of the *muhtasib* as the supervisor of commercial activities was somewhat crucial[90].

The Notables: The *Ulama* and the Commercial bourgeoisie: Patrons and Clients

With the demise of the Abbasids around 1248 A.D, the relationship between the government and the society within the majority of the Muslim Middle East was given

[88] Nazih Ayubi (1995) *Overstating The Arab State*. London: I. B. Tauris. p.76
[89] Albert Hourani (1970) *The Islamic City: A Colloquium*. Oxford: Bruno Cassirer Oxford. p.38
[90] Ibid.

shape by two main determinants. First, there was almost a monopoly of political power by politico-military groups of primarily Turkic origin, who were of course Muslim but kept themselves at a distance from the Arabic or Persian speaking peoples over whom they prevailed. Second:

> There was a close relationship between the commercial bourgeoisie and the *ulama*, those learned in the law and other religious sciences…this connection had several aspects: members of the bourgeois families took to learning and the men of learning married into such families. The *ulama* possessed a certain economic and social power through their control of the *awqaf*, and both groups shared an interest in a stable, prosperous and cultivated urban life. Members of the great bourgeois families and of the *ulama* together provided an urban leadership: their wealth, piety, culture and ancient names gave them social prestige and the patronage of quarters, ethnic or religious groups, crafts, or the city as a whole. [91]

Here, both the commercial bourgeois and the *ulama* formulated a typology of urban notables. The stature of those notables was not merely moral or social; on the contrary, urban notables had some essential politico-economic functions to fulfill.

Looking at the class origin of the *ulama*, we will find that, despite the fact that they were the core of the urban elite; they pretty much came from all walks of life and thus were undifferentiated from the rest of the population. By and large, the door was open for competence in the kind of religious and judicial knowledge required for the acquisition of the *ulama* status and, subsequently, if we trace the professional and class origin of these *ulama*, one finds that some of them were merchants, some were artisans, and others were bureaucrats.[92] By virtue of these hybrid origins, the *ulama* held firm ties with the majority of echelons of the Muslim society. [93]

[91] Ibid, p.17-18
[92] Ibid, p.204
[93] Sawsan El Messiri (1977) "The Changing role of the *futuwwa* in the social structure of Cairo". In *Patrons and Clients*. ed. Ernest Gellner and John Waterbury. London: Duckworth, p.243

Being the prime interpreters of Islamic law, the social, economic, and political agency of the *ulama* was crucial:

> The *ulama* were intimately involved in [shari`a's] application in everyday social and economic life. They were the judges and lawyers of the cities. Family life was under their jurisdiction. Commercial transactions, property transfers and contracts in general to be legally binding had to be witnessed and registered by people competent in Islamic law. The regulation of the markets was entrusted to the *ulama* and they were in addition the managers of the cities' educational, religious, and philanthropic institutions. All community interests were thus represented by this unspecialized, multi-competent body which was the religious, professional, commercial, and managerial elite all in one…the spokesmen, the leaders of the people.[94]

Additionally, the *ulama* also helped create a spectrum of communal cohesion within the urban Muslim society, as they constituted a higher order of associational life that cut across various social echelons, mainly via the schools of law, which were in practice assemblages of scholars. "They were made up of *ulama* study groups, teachers, disciples, interested members of the community and patrons; and *ulama* administrative clienteles such as the multitude of deputies, witnesses, orderlies, clerks…clienteles which radiated their influence and were to a limited degree an ordering force in the lives of the common people".[95]

Within most of the Mamluk and Ottoman states, there was a ruler (sultan) beneath whom an entire system of control was present: the governor and his household, the secretaries in the government agencies, the *muhtasib*, the *qadi*…etc. But in conjunction with these political actors, there was an important societal spectrum that had to be co-opted by the state, and that is where the political agency of urban notables comes in:

[94] Albert Hourani (1970) *The Islamic City: A Colloquium*. Oxford: Bruno Cassirer.p.204
[95] Ibid.

> The notables, the leaders of the bourgeois and the *ulama*, obeyed the government not only form fear or self-interest, but from concern for peace and security…But they were also "leaders" responsible to the urban population. At times they could use their independent power over it to mobilize urban forces and put pressure on the ruler. This mobilization was carried out through an ancient machinery of contacts between notables of the city and leaders of quarters, popular preachers, *shaykhs* of *turuq*, leaders of certain crafts…In this process, even those who held posts under the ruler might take part: the *qadi* could become a spokesman for the local *ulama*, the *shaykhs* of quarters or villages could act as clients of local leaders.[96]

In that sense, the urban notables were primarily key players on the streets of the city due to their affluence and capacity to stir the affairs of the street through networking and exercising of power.[97] More often than not, the political agency of urban notables went in accordance with the already existing political system. Mostly, "a strong government ruled in close partnership with the bourgeois and their leaders, and the influence of the leaders was thrown on the side of the existing order".[98]

Practically speaking, the notables could not replace the rulers due to their extreme diversity and lack of an organizational institution that could mobilize and unite a major part of these networks, possessed by the notables, at a particular point in time. By nature, these networks were fragmented and lacked a sense of cohesiveness. This spectrum of organizational control over the local notability and their active networks "could be only done by the military rulers, hence the long predominance of "Turkish" or Mamluk ruling groups, acting both as rulers and as patrons…until much later the decline of Ottoman authority led to the re-emergence of local leaders in the provincial cities".[99]

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[96] Ibid, p.19
[97] Albert Hourani (1981) *The Emergence of The Modern Middle East*. Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press. p.29
[98] Albert Hourani (1970) *The Islamic City: A Colloquium*. Oxford: Bruno Cassirer. p. 204
[99] Ibid, p.20

The phenomenon of *zu`ar* in Mamluk Syria sheds some light on the mechanisms of patronage politics at the time. In Damascus, the *zu`ar* (literally the troublemakers or scoundrels) were present around the late fifteenth century, however some sources note that the phenomenon had existed in previous periods under various names. The *zu`ar* were:

> Self consciously organized groups of young men…with recognized chiefs, called *kabirs*, some of whom claimed to be descendants of the prophet. They wore uniforms and a distinctive headdress…The *zu`ar* were recruited from the working population…Carpenters, criers, shopkeepers, and spinners were among them. They were organized by quarter and mostly in the turbulent quarters…They resisted what they regarded as unwarranted or excessive taxation, assassinated abusive Mamluks and tax collectors…The *zu`ar* were the core of the late fifteenth century and early sixteenth century popular resistance to the Mamluk regime.[100]

Inasmuch as they were sources of opposition for Mamluk domination, the *zu`ar* had to be also co-opted by the Mamluks who aimed at winning them over, utilizing their organizational capacity to strengthen their rule.

The Mamluks utilized the *zu`ar* as "clienteles whom they protected, armed, paid, and honored by reviews in military village violence. They employed them in wars, in repression of Bedouin or village violence, as personal following in disputes the Mamluks had with each other, and in their efforts to control and extort money from the population of the city".[101] Overall, it could be argued that in the Syrian cities of Damascus and Aleppo, as well as in their other powerhouses in Egypt and elsewhere, the Mamluks cultivated several networks of arms and money in dealing with the powerful socio-political key-players. On one hand, this strategy helped create a sort of clientele that played an efficient role in the administration of these cities and, on the other, it

[100] Ibid, p.201
[101] Ibid.

maintained a sense of social equilibrium that reinforced the grip of the Mamluk regime over the affairs of the territories it controlled.

The Ottomans: Modernization

Indeed it could be a shortcut to logical deduction or research to try to abbreviate the extended political history of the complex set of provinces that were under the Ottoman rule into a unified theme of features concerning the political agency of notables. For example, in the case of Egypt, a comparatively extensive period of Ottoman rule roughly lasted from 1517 until 1805, when Mohammad Ali reigned supreme and initiated his own dynasty. Instead, we will try to derive some potential linkage between the political role played by the notables in the late Ottoman period and the features of the social structure and the political system that accompanied the widespread wave of modernization of the late 1800's, with a special focus on the Egyptian case.

On aggregate, and throughout the various Ottoman provinces, the pattern of political notability that was existent during the Islamic Caliphates continued to prevail. Mostly, the notables of the Arab cities during the Ottoman period were local men that earned a certain standing of socioeconomic and political relevance.

> Under the Ottomans as before, these notables acted as intermediaries between the 'men of sword' and the local Muslim Population. Basically, they were loyal to the Sultan, but they were also leaders of their cities and heirs of urban civilization of Islam. At times they tried to curb Ottoman power or the use of it, and they had the means of doing so: They could mobilize public opinion by making use of preachers, heads of quarters, leaders of popular organizations, and they had some influence through their links with the religious hierarchy throughout the empire.[102]

[102] Albert Hourani (1981) *The Emergence of The Modern Middle East*. Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press. p.11

Such notables were drawn mainly from the traditionally renowned families of 'notables', some of which played a key role until modern times. Examples include the Khalidis and Alamis of Jerusalem, the Jabiris in Aleppo, the Gaylanis in Baghdad, and the Bakris in Cairo.[103]

Egypt Under Mohammed Ali (1805-1848) and The Change in Modes of Production: Exit the Classical Notables…Enter The Lesser Notables?

With the advent of Mohammed Ali in 1805, it was obvious that the political role of the classical urban notables of Egypt was somehow waning. Along with the diminishing political agency of the notables, there was also a sense of political void at large when it comes to the political activity of the urban population. Hourani notes that there seems to be a virtual vacuum with regard to the presence of any proof of political action of urban notables in Egypt throughout the 19th Century and perhaps up until the Urabi rebellion in 1881 when the local notables took part in the army rebellion that aimed at confronting Egypt's Khedive, Tawfik, who was also Mohammed Ali's great grandson. In fact, the exposé of Egypt in the nineteenth century is an anomalous one: "At one end, a gradual increase in the political activity of the urban population…reaching its height in the period between the first revolt against the French and the movement which carried Mohammed Ali to power; much later in 1870's, a sudden upsurge, and in between virtually nothing, a political vacuum".[104]

In essence, some would argue that the phase of modernization that took place within the Ottoman provinces brought a practical end to the political influence of the

[103] Ibid.
[104] Ibid, p.40

notables. Indeed the reforms of the *tanzimat* period in the Ottoman Empire and the similar attempts in Egypt "would, if carried to their logical conclusion, have destroyed the independent power of the notables and the mode of political action it made possible" ideally establishing a "uniform and centralized administration, linked directly with each citizen, and working in accordance with its own rational principles of justice, applied equally to all".[105] Despite the fact that these reforms met some success, on aggregate they failed to deliver the aspired objectives. The reasons for this minimal success vary, but, importantly, one can outline the essentiality of the presence of an absolute ruler in most of the cases such reformations were attempted. Quite often, the ruler was only willing to apply these alterations in the governing system as far as they did not threaten his supremacy. Rather, most rulers attempted to capitalize on such reformations in order to consolidate their supremacy.

In Egypt, the process of administrative reform was accompanied with the monopolization of political action which came along with the rise of a paramount ruler, Mohammed Ali, who established an authoritarian scheme of political power, independent of the Ottoman Empire and its policies. Along with this political scheme, there was also an alteration in the modes of production of the Egyptian state. "With Muhammad Ali's arrival, the move towards a capitalist mode of production began…State centralization was enforced, while the semi-communal organizations of the countryside, as well as the artisan and commercial guilds and the Sufi orders…were all dissolved".[106]

[105] Ibid, p.51.
[106] Nazih Ayubi (1995) *Overstating The Arab State. London*: I. B. Tauris. p.100

With the abolition of the *Iltizam* system, which empowered a certain class of Mamluks and other powerful notables in order to collect taxes from peasants, Mohammed Ali had indeed ensured the demise of any potential political rivalry that could arise from notable figures within the Egyptian society. "By collecting taxes directly, Mohammed Ali ensured that no new class of *multazims* should arise; when, towards the end of his reign, a new class of landowners began to come into existence, they did not at first possess the same means as the Mamluks of putting pressure on the government."[107] It is true that this class of landowners was soon able to attain a position of power within the rural economy, but landownership by itself did not create political power once more until Khedive Ismail began to depend upon the landowners' help and support in the 1870's.[108]

Of course one could still argue that there was some political action on the popular level during the Mohammed Ali era, however the outlets for such action were limited.

> The instruments of political action had also been destroyed. The tax farms had gone, the associations of the craftsmen remained…and so did the *turuq*, but the stricter policing of the street and the bazaars made popular action more difficult. In the countryside, the sedentarisation of the Bedouin, and the growth of the power of the *umda*, the government agent in the villages, destroyed other possible means of action. It seems too that Mohammed Ali set himself deliberately to dispense of those popular leaders who, in the period of confusion before he came to power, had served as mobilisers of popular support in favor of the contenders for power. [109]

In fact Mohammed Ali incepted his rule with the eradication of those that supported him initially, such as Umar Makram, a local notable who was also an intermediary with a popular following and access to the military.

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[107] Albert Hourani (1981) *The Emergence of The Modern Middle East*. Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press p.52
[108] Ibid.
[109] Ibid.

Towards the end of the 19th Century, the political agency of the notables was on the rise again. With the considerable increase in the urban population and the revival of Al Azhar as a religious institution under the patronage of Khedive Ismail, political notability came to the forefront of the Egyptian polity again. Increasingly, and with the expansion of the Egyptian army to meet with the aspirations of the newly rising Egyptian state under the Mohammed Ali Dynasty, Egyptians of rural origin gradually became the backbone of the newly established state institutions, particularly the army. The arising leaders were of Egyptian as well as Mamluk origins, and they were incrementally accumulating landowning privileges, primarily through the land grants of the ruler. "Riaz, Nubar, Sharif, Barudi are the new politicians, and behind them one can see in the shadows different groups inside the ruling family. As politicians they still work in the traditional way, by building up their own households and systems of clients".[110]

After the first shock of the British occupation of 1881, the political role of the notables was given a further push. "British rule was indirect; its official purpose was to make possible the end of the occupation…it needed intermediaries…In such circumstances, the notables could play a part, and as usual an ambiguous one, supporting the British occupation but also discreetly serving as the focal points of discontent".[111]

The *futuwwa:* The advent of the Lesser Notables

As stated earlier, with the decline of the Mamluk and, more so of the Ottoman states, it seemed that the waning political agency of the notable patrons- the *muhtasib* and the commercial bourgeoisie- was gradually giving way to the rise of other political actors.

[110]Ibid, p.54
[111]Ibid.

In Egypt, Muhammad Ali somehow succeeded in eliminating the political relevance of the traditional Mamluk and local patrons. Despite the rough return of some political notability of sorts towards the end of the 19th/early beginnings of the 20th Century, there was yet a political vacuum to be filled and utilized by the ruling elite. Perhaps here comes the increasing importance of a certain figure that was predominant in the folktales as well as the streets of the Middle Eastern city, that of the *futuwwa*. In Cairo, and perhaps up until the mid-20th Century, each locality in the popular quarters was identified with one or several of those *futuwwas*. The term is usually used to "denote a strong bold man…Generally; it has been applied to the masses but occasionally to members of the elite as well. In all cases the element of protection has been seminal to the role".[112]

The conceptualization of the *futuwwa* had its roots in the later Middle Ages, when "the organization of the crafts seem to become more articulate, especially by adopting the ideology of the *futuwwa*…Salman Al Farisi plays a great role in the later traditions of the *futuwwa*, that ideal moral and social code, which also provided ideals and ceremonies to the associations of the craftsmen…Salman is honored as the patron of the guilds".[113] In Egyptian folktales, the *futuwwa* is depicted as being "generous, courageous, possessing *muru'a* (manliness). He is also in Egyptian epics, noted for his cleverness, cunning, sense of humor, and verbal skill".[114]

Nevertheless, in addition to the moral and personal attributions of the *futuwwa*, there are also some social and politico-economic roles that were fulfilled by this type of

[112] Sawsan El Messiri (1977) "The Changing role of the *futuwwa* in the social structure of Cairo" In *Patrons and Clients*. ed. Ernest Gellner and John Waterbury. London: Duckworth. p.239

[113] Albert Hourani (1970) *The Islamic City: A Colloquium*. Oxford: Bruno Cassirer. p.41-45

[114] Sawsan El Messiri (1977) "The Changing role of the *futuwwa* in the social structure of Cairo". In *Patrons and Clients*. ed. Ernest Gellner and John Waterbury. London: Duckworth. p. 241

personages in the milieu of the Egyptian city, mainly as leaders of the urban quarters. El Messiri notes that this sociopolitical role for the *futuwwas* was somewhat intensified towards the end of the nineteenth century:

> By the middle of the nineteenth century one no longer hears of resistance movements spanning several quarters, but rather of influential personages, including *futuwwat*, operating within quarters. While documentary evidence is scarce, one may nonetheless deduce something of the role the *futuwwat* played within the quarters or *harat*. In many ways these were social entities as well as physical and geographical units, and their inhabitants were often set off from those of the neighboring *harat*…To some degree interests among *harat* were conflicting, and it was in the context of defending those interests that the nineteenth century *futuwwa* exercised his role as protector. [115]

Regardless of the timeframe within which he predominated, a common feature of the *futuwwa's* dealings with the inhabitants of the neighborhood, one may assume, was the fact that they were mostly based on intimate contact and personal ties.

The 20th Century *futuwwa*

In the beginning of the 20th Century, one finds the *futuwwa* aiming at establishing himself within the neighborhood as "the paragon of all those virtues and qualities that most citizens of old Cairo would like in some measure to claim as their own. Foremost among those qualities…is physical strength"[116]. But this scheme of strength must also be accompanied with other qualities, such as bravery and generosity. Such characteristics are quite important in defining the kind of protection and services that are provided by the *futuwwa* to the inhabitants of the neighborhood in which he reigns as the supreme patron.[117]

[115] Ibid.
[116] Ibid, p.243
[117] Note the similarities between the qualities of the *futuwwa* figure in Cairo's quarters in the early 20th Century and those of the contemporary urban lesser notabilities that were introduced earlier in the first

In fact, an essential part of the social identity of the *futuwwa* is defined by the network of social and economic activities he is involved in. In his own neighborhood, he is not only conceived as the leader and protector, but also as the problem-solver and the dispenser of much needed services and resources:

> Most of the problems the people bring to the *futuwwa* relate to work situations, or those that emerge from the traditional style of life and the values attached to it. Typically, people interacted on a personal basis with no formal contracts, bills, or receipts. In these arrangements a man was tied by his tongue…bound by what he had said. In this way if someone had borrowed money from his neighbor without receipt and refused to pay it back or denied that he had borrowed it, the *futuwwa*, after investigation, could force him to return the money. Some clients may take commodities, promising to pay later, and then continually postpone payment or refuse it altogether; the merchant would then seek help from the *futuwwa*. The *futuwwa* might even end a dispute by paying what was at issue himself.[118]

Logically, with the virtual absence of official institutional venues for the facilitation of the affairs of the populace, the sociopolitical role of the *futuwwa* appears to be rather crucial as the arbitrator and settler of disputes. In spite of the vigorous process of modernization and institutionalization that overwhelmed the Egyptian state in the ascent of the 20th Century, the formalization of state services could not meet the needs and demands of the urban dwellers[119] and, consequently, the room was still open for such popular figures to operate efficiently within the popular quarters of Cairo.

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chapter, and which will be portrayed with further scrutiny in the upcoming sections. In addition to the relevance of physical strength and courage, as presented, as features of today's influential lesser notabilities, there are yet modern equivalents to such qualities that often characterize the 21st Century lesser notable. For instance, in this case, the power and influence that the contemporary lesser notability possesses and which often enable him to actualize certain objectives on the ground, i.e. by issuing a building license or by granting a person an employment opportunity, could be considered as equivalents. Also the financial capabilities of the contemporary lesser notabilities can be considered as a modern-day equivalent to the physical strength that the futuwwua enjoyed in the past.

[118] Sawsan El Messiri (1977) "The Changing role of the *futuwwa* in the social structure of Cairo". In *Patrons and Clients*. ed. Ernest Gellner and John Waterbury, p.244

[119] Robert Hunter (2000) "State-Society Relations in Nineteenth Century Egypt: The Years of Transition". *Middle Eastern Studies*. Vol.36, No.3

The *futuwwa* also played an economic role of extreme importance within the milieu of the neighborhood. This role connoted a sense of benevolence for the entirety of the community. He would "supply the *hitta* with scarce commodities, such as oil or kerosene, to spare the people from black market prices. In the economic crisis of 1942, a certain *futuwwa* used to procure the Kerosene allotment of his whole *hitta*, protect it during delivery, and then distribute it equally throughout the *hitta*".[120] Of course, such activities were not out of mere good will, but they were also pragmatic practices that reinforced the paramount role of the *futuwwa* as the sole leader and protector of his own neighborhood.

Therefore the *futuwwa* would work in financially rewarding jobs that would place him above the average wage-earner and help empower his stratum as the patron and leader of the locale within which he operates. For example, Aziza al-Fahla, one of the few examples of renowned female *futuwwas* in Cairo in 1930's and 1940's, earned enough from her work as a prime dealer in foodstuffs to enable her to purchase eight houses in her neighborhood, in addition to a coffee shop and a few other commercial stores. Furthermore, as the leader and facilitator of various networks, the *futuwwa* does not operate alone, and his prestige and prowess is further dependent upon the number of supporters he acquires. These potential supporters come from all walks of life and are usually referred to as the *shilla* or the clique.[121]

In summation, one notes that the role of the *futuwwa* in the social structure of the urban masses was more of a protector as well as an alternative to the formal and mostly

[120] Sawsan El Messiri (1977) "The Changing role of the *futuwwa* in the social structure of Cairo". In *Patrons and Clients*. ed. Ernest Gellner and John Waterbury. London: Duckworth. p. 241
[121] Ibid.

inefficient state system. This ascribed role has sometimes placed him in confrontation with the ruling elite, yet in other times the *futuwwa* was utilized by these elites as an intermediary and a potential facilitator of a variety of social, economic, and political roles. In doing so, the *futuwwa* partially succeeded in "minimizing the abuses and exploitation of the authorities".[122] Perhaps up until today, the Cairene polity still holds a place for the functional role that was conventionally played by the *futuwwa*. As stated earlier and as shall be displayed further in the context of this writing, one could argue that the institutional substitutes for the functions performed by the *futuwwa* have not yet rooted themselves in the popular quarters of Cairo, and that is the main reason why the values associated with the *futuwwa* are kept alive until today. As shall be portrayed in the upcoming chapters, the socioeconomic/political roles ascribed to the *futuwwa* figure resemble to a great extent the functionalities fulfilled by the lesser notabilities in Cairo's popular quarters in the contemporary period.

The 1952 Revolution: Contextualizing the reemergence of the Lesser Notables

> "If, beginning with the eleventh century, we examine what has happened in France one half-century to another, we shall not fail to perceive that at the end of each of these periods a two-fold revolution has taken place in the state of society. The noble has gone down social ladder, and the commoner has gone up; the one descends as the other rises. Every half century brings them nearer to each other, and they will soon meet. Nor is this peculiar to France…"[123]
>
> Alexis de Tocqueville,
> Democracy in America, 1835

The prominent historian/economist Galal Amin draws attention to an essential factor that played a paramount role in formulating the Egyptian polity in the aftermath of

[122] Ibid.
[123] Galal Amin (2000) *Whatever Happened To The Egyptians?* The American University in Cairo Press, p.1

the 1952 revolution, which is social mobility. Amin states that despite the fact that most of the sharp alterations pertaining to the Egyptian social structure were clearly observed post the *Infitah* policies in the mid-1970s, the accelerating pace of social mobility that characterized this period had its firm roots in the 1952 revolution. "Economic liberalization may have itself been one of the main factors accelerating the rate of social mobility, but it has by no means been the only one. Important factors were at work long before the 1970's"[124]. Indeed, with the advent of the nationalization and agricultural reform policies adopted by 1952 regime, new types of middle class professionals and technocrats rose into the forefront as the viable politico-economic segments of the society, and the regime depended upon such segments as the main constituency of support.

The amalgamation of policies adopted by the 1952 regime, contributing to the rise in the rate of social mobility, include a variety of economic and political measure, such as,

> The successive land reform laws between 1952 and 1961, the nationalization and sequestration measures of the early 1960's, the raising of minimum wages and of the rates of income tax, as well as the very rapid expansion of free education and other social services. To this one must also add the rapid increase in the rate of investment in agriculture and industry from 1957 to 1965, which led to the absorption of large numbers of agricultural surplus labor in irrigation projects…The growth of bureaucracy and of government-created political organizations provided new career ladders for a great number of university graduates who could not be absorbed in agriculture or industry.[125]

Along this process, the political and economic relevance of the classical notables, primarily the giant landowners and businessmen, which roughly constituted less than 1 %

[124] Ibid, p.11
[125] Ibid, p.15

of Egypt's population at the time, gave way to this considerably larger middle class, which was also gradually growing in terms of relative size and also in terms of the economic strata and political roles ascribed to it. [126]

In the 1970's, more sources of income were induced into the Egyptian economy, mostly external. After a few years of recession post the 1967 defeat, the open door policies of Sadat encouraged the absorption of a variety of external sources of income, including, foreign loans, increasing revenues from the Suez Canal, oil production, tourism, and, most significantly, labor remittances from abroad. Subsequently, Egypt witnessed an unprecedented rate of economic growth that reached 8 % in 1979,[127] which enabled certain segments of the society to amass unprecedented accumulations of wealth as well. Those were mainly the intermediaries: merchants, real-estate bidders and contractors, and import-export facilitators were among those that benefited the most from this open door craze. "President Sadat used to publicly take pride in the fact that his presidency witnessed an accumulation of wealth resulting in due to the surge in the pieces of residential apartments, buildings, and land. He practically measured the success of his policies with this indicator"[128]. Indeed Sadat was keen on attracting those newly wealthy classes to the circles of political power, and, eventually, those that were at the apex of commercial and real estate activities were the newly viable politico-economic actors within the Egyptian polity.

Overall, it is safe to assume that the 1952 regime triggered a deeply entrenched process of social mobility that swapped the Egyptian polity for decades, empowering

[126] Galal Amin (2005) *'Asr Al Jamahir Al Ghafira*: 1952-2002. Cairo: Dar Al Shrouk. p.155-156
[127] Ibid, p.159
[128] Ibid.

various categories of social actors and enabling them to attain certain strata of economic and political dominance in various time-periods. This process was actualized in accordance with the socioeconomic policies adopted by the state. For example, during the Nasser years, the ruling regime put emphasis on the role of the newly rising professional/technocratic middle class, which was subsequently empowered via massively subsidized state services. On the other hand, the period of Sadat also witnessed an accelerating rate of social mobility that gave rise to a relatively new prototype of politico-economic notability; that of the intermediaries:

> For those social groups who have only recently had access to surplus income, investment in industry or agriculture may seem too risky, requiring more capital, a longer gestation period, and greater experience than is required by investment in residential buildings, transportation, tourism, or the import trade. Much of what is regarded by economists as 'unproductive' investment is in the channels preferred by these investors with less experience who are also more anxious to prove their social advancement than and less confident in their ability to maintain their newly acquired social status.[129]

Arguably, with the widespread acceleration of these relatively new types of commercial activities that ensure rapid profitability, the loyalty to the state also diminished. In fact, most of the income accumulated in the 1970's and 1980's could not be attributed to state activities, but rather to its inactivity: "To the merely passive role of the state in allowing people to migrate, and to its failure to regulate the rate of inflation and pattern of investment".[130]

Hence, in a rough resemblance to, or perhaps continuation of, the political notability of urban and rural intermediaries cited earlier in this research, the phase of

[129] Galal Amin (2000) *Whatever Happened To The Egyptians?* The American University in Cairo Press. p.20
[130] Ibid, p.22

Sadat witnessed an increasingly growing socioeconomic and political role for an echelon of socioeconomic actors that could be described as the 'lesser notables'. By and large, the Egyptian state has been comparatively successful in exercising efficient political and economic control over the central locales of the country: the major and relatively developed urban dwellings in Cairo and Alexandria, the avenues and squares in the towns, the checkpoints between governorates…etc. However, within the peripheral urban and rural popular quarters, there exists a sense of self-management that somehow requires the facilitation provided by intermediaries:

> The Egyptian state's recurrent problem as a central/centralized state is that of identifying the intermediaries through which it may observe global control over these communities, maintain public order and impose the social items regarding which the regime refuses to negotiate. Under the old regime, the role of the intermediary between central power and the local level was played, in the countryside, by the owners of latifundiae enjoying absolute authority over their villages…and, in the city, by the notability system and the *futuwwa* network…Under Sadat, and more clearly still under Mubarak until the end of the 1980's, the regime attempted to co-opt the Islamist trend for this role…The point is to know to what extent this redistribution of roles…will transform fundamentally the ways in which effective power is exercised in Egypt.[131]

In the next section, I shall attempt to portray some of the features of this newly rising category of lesser notability that, arguably, had its roots in the scheme of social mobility initiated by the 1952 regime, and was further created by the open door policies of Sadat.

The Lesser Notables in The Contemporary Period

There is indeed some sound resemblance between the kind of attributions related to the *biytkabarluh* figures of authority in the popular quarters of Cairo today, cited earlier in Chapter I, and the aforementioned functions of the *futuwwa* figure which was

[131] Alain Roussillon (1998) "Republican Egypt Interpreted: Revolution And Beyond" In *The Cambridge History of Egypt*. ed. M. W. Daly. Cambridge University Press, p.391.

predominant in the Cairo and other Middle Eastern cities for hundreds of years. These two categories; the *futuwwa* as well as the *biytkabarluh*, appear to be distinctive from the traditional notables introduced earlier in this chapter:

> In comparison to the Ottoman notables, today's notables are of a lesser social status in the sense that they do not issue from prominent families with a long, established history. Further, their interventions in local communities are not of the same scale as the interventions of the earlier notables. Although a few of the contemporary local notability have managed to enter national politics through elections to the National Assembly, they could not be referred to as national figures.[132]

In light of these differences, today's local notables have been described by Ismail as lesser notables.

Today's lesser notabilities have also gone through a process of transformation that overwhelmed Cairo since the early 20th Century.[133] Within the popular quarters of Cairo, both the social polities as well as the functionality of protection, which was traditionally undertaken by the *futuwwa*, have changed to a certain extent. A plethora of sociopolitical and economic alterations took place in the milieu of the popular neighborhood, setting the ground for such transformation. First, there existed an increasingly heterogeneous population as a result of the continuing waves of rural-urban migration directed towards Cairo, which created a sense of tension between those various societal actors with different, and sometimes conflicting, ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Then, with the incremental rise in the overall population and the subsequent overcrowding of the popular

[132] Salwa Ismail (2006) *Political Life in Cairo's New Quarter: Encountering The Everyday State*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. p. 48

[133] Here, the term "Lesser Notables" connotes a sort of notability that is not necessarily linked to agrarian or landowning privileges, as it is the case with Batatu's contributions on Syria for example. Egypt's new typology of lesser notables involves a multiplicity of commercial agents: small-medium businessmen, contractors, shop-owners…etc. These figures succeeded in establishing a scope of political agency that pivoted their moral and social roles as community leaders, mostly active within the popular quarters. Overall, there has been a significant surge in the role played by those lesser notables with the advent of the *Infitah* and then ERSAP policies in 1974 and 1991, respectively.

quarters of Cairo, there seems to be a gradual erosion of the role familial and personal ties play, and the picture seems to be changing with regard to the role expected to be played by the local patron or leader. Another crucial transformation, albeit also subject to radical alterations in the rise of the neo-liberal phase in the early 1990's, is the "increasing intervention of the state in terms of policing and the maintenance of local order", which narrowed the scope of the activities of traditional popular politics[134].

However, in spite of these transformations, several taxonomies of lesser notabilities are still operational in the popular neighborhoods of Cairo today. A multitude of merchants, real estate contractors and small to medium sized shop-owners have come to the forefront of political notability of the popular neighborhoods as viable actors, establishing "their own economic and social networks through which they consolidate their positions in their neighborhoods".[135] Examples of merchants and real estate contractors that belong to this category are quite recurrent and they usually come from modest social origins and build up their wealth via investing in commercial goods and real estate ventures. Most of these notables also invest in building their status by forging socioeconomic links with their neighborhoods: donating to charitable activities inside and outside their quarters, setting up tables for the needy during the month of Ramadan and other social and religious festivities, and organizing other collections of donations for activities in the neighborhood through local mosques. These activities are considered as a

[134] Sawsan El Messiri (1977) "The Changing role of the *futuwwa* in the social structure of Cairo". In *Patrons and Clients*. ed. Ernest Gellner and John Waterbury. London: Duckworth. p.252
[135] Salwa Ismail (2006) *Political Life in Cairo's New Quarter: Encountering The Everyday State*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. p.50

sign of their goodness and an expression of humility and connectedness with the people of their own locale.[136]

Yet, importantly, along with the socioeconomic features of those lesser notabilities, there is also an essential political dimension that is crucial. Most of these figures also seek to cultivate links with the state authorities, "organizing banquets to which the police commissioner (*ma'mur*), the head of the police investigative unit, and members of the local and national assemblies are invited…The organization of these activities allows for direct relations with the leadership".[137] Subsequently, through their contacts with the public institutions of the state and their positions in the community, today's lesser notables are sought out by their clients to resolve disputes and sort out problems.

With the incrementally increasing relevance of the lesser notabilities on the political level, it was rather logical that they would start seeking positions in the local and national legislatures, mainly as a strategy for consolidating and further formalizing their political prowess and authority.

> In this respect the lesser notability could be said to be following in the steps of the commercial bourgeoisie. Over the last decade, large entrepreneurs and business persons have run, in increasing number, in elections to the National Assembly. As a consequence, their share of seats has been rising. In 2000, this entrepreneurial class won seventy-seven seats, accounting for 17 percent of the total…Merchants and contractors from popular quarters have joined the business class in running for the National Assembly seats. This entry of the lesser notables into national politics should be interpreted as a confirmation of their role as intermediaries with government…The notability is also active in party politics, as members in the local assembly, and as secretaries in the local secretaries to the ruling party local branches.[138]

[136] Ibid.
[137] Ibid.
[138] Ibid.

In fact, it should be noted that the mounting importance of the Lesser Notables stems from their mediating role as state/society intermediaries within their neighborhoods. In addition to the resources they allocate locally to the citizens of their own quarters, they also maintain a network of ties with the state authorities, which enables them to provide a variety of services to the locals, as will be dissected later in throughout the upcoming chapters.

As mentioned earlier in Chapter I, perhaps the most vivid portrayal of the lesser notables of Cairo's popular quarters nowadays is exemplified via the *biytkabarluh* personas, observed in a wide spectrum of popular quarters. Indeed, the ethos of the *biytkabarluh* involves a certain set of duties and services that is expected to be provided by such a figure. Quite often, he/she is expected to gain access to state resources and services that would be otherwise very difficult for the local to acquire weren't it for the intervention of this particular *biytkabarluh* figure. This does correspond with the increasing blurriness in the boundaries between the state and the society or, put differently, the public and the private, which was inevitable with the advent of the *Infitah* policies.

Arguably, the acceleration of the open door policies, along with the gradual retreat of the Egyptian state from the public domain, required the emergence of a new type of societal actors characterized by their capability of mastering "administrative codes and procedures and their access to the "informal" decision-making networks within ministries and government-service sectors".[139] The profile of Hajj Saleh, a commercial

[139] Alain Roussillon (1998) "Republican Egypt Interpreted: Revolution And Beyond" In *The Cambridge History of Egypt*. ed. M. W. Daly. Cambridge University Press, p.377

retailer and owner of a medium-sized shoe factory in the popular quarter of Bulaq displays that:

> Acceding to the position of someone *biytkabarluh* is materially inscribed. It is the hajj's visible links to formal institutions that are ultimately acknowledged and validated at times of intervention. The hajj's involvement in charitable work earns him the image of a "man of good", while his links with the police establish him as a "man of power". As someone *biytkabrluh*, the hajj is incorporated by the state apparatus of coercion to mediate in disputes with the local population.[140]

Thus, by virtue of their social standing and the political role ascribed to them, individuals like hajj Saleh signify a notability of sorts.

As a matter of fact, such figures of lesser notability have become so recurrent in the polity of the popular quarters of Cairo that they were depicted in the extremely popular novel *'Imarat Ya'coubian* in 2003. In the novel, the author presents the ongoing rivalry and competition between the seemingly pious entrepreneur, Hajj Azam, who owns a wholesale-retail clothes store and also maintains strong ties with the ruling elites, and Hajj Abu Hamidou, a wholesale-retail merchant with Islamist inclinations and alleged links to the Muslim Brotherhood. Ultimately, and through his ties with the ruling elites, Hajj Azam succeeds in overcoming his Islamist rival, securing a seat in the Parliament, in addition to various business incentives facilitated via the backchannels that he gained access to with the aid of his contacts within the regime.[141] This tale is quite illuminating if we attempt to observe the political role played by the Lesser Notables and the potentialities of them being co-opted by the dominant political forces.

[140] Salwa Ismail (2006) *Political Life in Cairo's New Quarter: Encountering The Everyday State*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.p.64
[141] Ibid, p.54

The NDP versus the Muslim Brotherhood: A Contest over Lesser Notables?

If we look at the lesser notabilities of Cairo today, an essential query poses itself with regard to the linkage with state authorities. If access to the echelons of notability seems to be related to establishing profound networks with the state institutions, mostly co-opted by the NDP, then what about those elements that stand in opposition to the government, yet maintain a sense of socioeconomic networking that enables them to fulfill the role of the notability? In fact, the prototype that comes to mind is that of the Islamist notables who have met considerable successes in establishing a sizable web of patronage in a wide variety of urban as well as rural constituencies in Egypt. Could the government counteract the alternative patron/client stratagem that is capitalized by the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist forces? As a matter of fact, the current governing regime is quite aware of the existential threat posed by these networks. In 2007 the state launched a massive campaign against the "financial arm" of the Muslim Brotherhood all over the country, arresting hundreds of people that were allegedly associated with a variety of commercial activities that funded the activities of the Muslim Brotherhood.[142] Yet will this be a sufficient machination for consolidating the NDP's power in the face of the Brotherhood? The scope and magnitude of the informal networks in Egypt seem to suggest otherwise.

By and large, the process of divorcing the state structure from the Islamist web of networks does not appear to be an easy bid, provided the fact that, as stated in Chapter I, those Islamist forces tend to pose themselves within the already existing structure of the state system, creating cohesive alliances and networks with state authorities and

[142] *Al Ahram*. January 15th, 2007. Vol.131, Issue 43869.

personnel. Actually, Islamist commercial and financial networks are inevitably drawn into interwoven relations with the state. "For example, in 1980's, the Islamic Societies for the Placement of Funds (ISPF) maintained close contacts with high-ranking government officials and prominent sheikhs. For various reasons…the government intervened to put an end to its speculative investments"[143]. Although the regime proclaimed that its intervention was due to the irregularities exercised by these funds, the fact that it had initially licensed these entities then clamped down upon them when they started growing considerably as Islamist alternatives to secular banks, suggests otherwise. Hence, breaking those state/Islamist ties might be somehow dilemmatic as it might involve state and NDP personnel as well.

In the course of the upcoming chapters, this research will attempt to contextualize the machinations utilized by the Lesser Notables that adhere to the NDP as well as those that appear to be functioning under the umbrella of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB). In doing so, it is rather important to assert that a significant difference between these two prototypes, those allying with the NDP/state stratagem as opposed to the Islamist ones, is that while the former are usually co-opted by the state, the latter's roles and actions are "framed by ideological articulations that challenged state legitimacy"[144]. Indeed "the state authorities could not tolerate the rise of a contending leadership, but we may also argue that in assiduously co-opting local figures, state authorities seek to inhibit the rise of independent leaders".[145]

[143] Salwa Ismail (2006) *Political Life in Cairo's New Quarter: Encountering The Everyday State*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.p.52-56. The Arabic name for them is *Sharrekat Tawzif Al-Amwal*
[144] Ibid.
[145] Ibid.

Conclusions

Throughout its vast history, the Muslim city has witnessed various schemes of political notability. Cairo is no exception, and the politico-economic role of those notables has been quintessential in maintaining the civic life, mediating between the locals and the state authorities. Political notability took various shapes and forms throughout the Mamluk and Ottoman periods; however, with the rise of Muhammad Ali into the apex of the Egyptian state in 1805, the grip of the state over the socioeconomic and political affairs was tightened, minimizing the role of those mediating notables and allowing for a class of lesser notability to arise. With this, an apparent rise in the importance of the role played by the *futuwwa* was evident within the popular quarters of Cairo. In a sense, the *futuwwa* represents a possible linkage between the traditional figures of popular political meaningfulness and the lesser notables of today.

Within the context of the Egyptian polity, the advent of Mohammed Ali and the inception of the modern period brought forward a virtual vacuum in the polity. By then, there was more room for a multitude of local (lesser) notables to act as the necessary politico-economic intermediaries on sub-divided/smaller echelons. In essence, one could argue that on the level of the *Harra* (quarter) or the *Hitta* (neighborhood), there emerged an increasingly influential political agency for the *futuwwa* in the early 20th Century. There are indeed very interesting similarities between the kind of politico-economic functions fulfilled by the *futuwwa* and those of the *biytkabarluh* figure, predominant in the present-day popular quarters of Cairo, and outlined earlier in the course of Chapter I. One could argue that those *biytkbarluh* figures in fact display an extension of the legacies of the *futuwwas*. Today, the lesser notables of Cairo play a crucial role as mediators and

facilitators of various commercial goods and administrative services. They have mostly anchored themselves within occupational vacancies that provide the locals with necessary functions, which made them, subsequently, a target of co-option for the viable political forces operating within Cairo's popular neighborhoods; the NDP as well as the MB.

The chapter at hand can be considered as a framework for the subsequent work, as it attempted to outline some of the various historical manifestations of lesser notability figures in the Middle Eastern city since the Islamic Caliphate, focusing mostly on Egypt. In doing so, it introduced several popular figures that all shared the characterization of the lesser notability that possesses a considerable degree of socioeconomic and political agency in the urban quarter. Such figures can be indeed considered as the predecessors that set the stage for the emergence of ibn-al-balad, the urban lesser notable that actually thrived in the popular quarter in the 20th Century, and whose persona shall be scrutinized further in the next chapter as it portrays the emergence of the 'lesser notable' of the 21st Century.

Chapter III: Misr Al Qadima: The Popular Quarter And The Polity of The Lesser Notable

"In between a proud ancient history and huge walls that recite tales as old as mankind, and a crowded present that is full of adjacent houses and people, lies Misr Al Qadima…The features of this district do in fact draw a picture for the entire country with all its contradictions".[146]

Misr Al Qadima, which in Arabic translates as Old Egypt, is arguably Cairo's oldest quarter. Built on the remnants of other predecessors to the Cairo that the Fatimids had constructed in the eleventh century A.D. such as, the Ancient Egyptian Memphis, the Roman fortresses of Babylon, and the Arabo-Islamic Fustat, this district is now home for more than 500,000 inhabitants that come from a plethora of social backgrounds and classes and occupy various socioeconomic roles and strata. Today, the area suffers from socioeconomic disparities that make it one of Cairo's poorest districts, in terms of income distribution and education. Moreover, and as shall be shown later in this chapter, the demographic profile of the area is characterized with a set of socioeconomic and political features that make this district a favorable environment for the emergence of the lesser notables as viable sociopolitical agents. As a prelude, the following introductory section shall provide a brief historical synopsis of Misr Al Qadima.

Introduction

The famous gated town of Babylon was located in the district currently called Misr Al Qadima, to the south of Cairo. This city was the dominant urban center just before the Arab conquest of Egypt and was connected with the Red Sea by a canal.[147] Cairo as it is known now had gradually developed over three centuries after the Arab

[146] An extract from the introduction to the documentary entitled "Misr Al Qadima…Legal & Political Participation". Documentary, Legal And Political Participation Project in Misr Al Qadima, Cairo, 2006

[147] Mohammed F. Hussein "Potential Design For Mass Transportation in Egypt". A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The University of Michigan Industry Program, May, 1965.

conquest of Egypt and it went through various phases of metamorphosis until reaching its status as the urban conglomerate that we know of today. The first two precursors of Cairo were Al Fustat, which was the first city to be constructed by Amr Ibn al-a`s post the Arab conquest of Egypt in 641 A.D. as a garrison town, and Al `Askar (The Military in Arabic), which was built by the Umayyads as the settlement containing the official residence of the Arab governors and their troops. Both of these towns were in essence an extension as well as a progression for the old town of Babylon and they were the basis for the chief city that was to be built by the Fatimids.

In the ninth century the Egyptian sovereign Ahmed Ibn Toulun reckoned that Al-`Askar and Al-Fustat were overcrowded and unsuitable to have room for his army and officials, accordingly in the year 870 A.D:

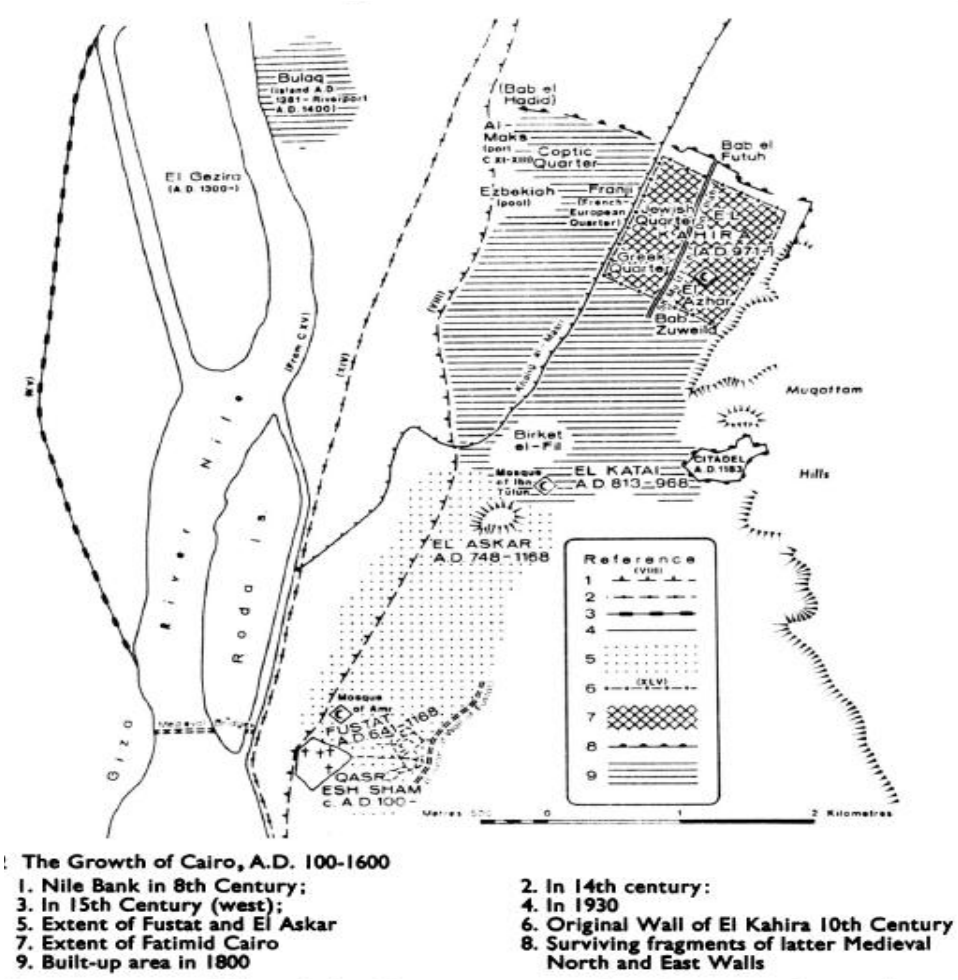
> He laid the foundations of his new capital city, Al-Katai'. This name means the quarters and the city was divided into separate sections, each inhabited by a certain class or ethnic group. This was the first time a definite planning system was used by Arabs in Egypt. Touluns' administration followed the system of straight streets intersecting at right angles, forming a crude gradation plan…In 969 A.D. General Gawher El-Sickilly of the Fatimids of North Africa started to lay out the foundations of "Al-Kahira" which means "the conqueror". Al-Kahira included a Kalipha's palace, barracks for the army, stables for the cavalry, government buildings…etc. The site of this city was about 2-1/2 miles north of Al-Fustat.[148]

Hence the centrality of what is known today as "Misr Al Qadima" was well in place since the outset of the Cairene urban conglomerate. In practice, the development of Cairo took the shape and form of the Medieval Muslim city outlined earlier in the context of Chapter II, where "each quarter of the city was assigned to a tribe or racial group that had joined the Fatimid invasion. Among these groups were Greeks, Turks, Berbers and Africans"[149].

[148] Ibid.
[149] Ibid.

Throughout the centuries to come, Cairo expanded into a world capital; the most populated city in the world outside China at the time. "The medieval cycle of Cairo's growth and subsequent decline began essentially with the accession of Saladin to the leadership of Sunni Islam. It rose sharply within the next 175 years, reaching an apogee during the long reigns of the Mamluk sultan al-Nasir ibn Qalawun before the middle of the fourteenth century".[150] Map 3.a shows the urban expansion that Cairo has gone through since the Arab conquest.

Map 3.a[151]



The Growth of Cairo, A.D. 100-1600
1. Nile Bank in 8th Century;
2. In 14th century:
3. In 15th Century (west);
4. In 1930
5. Extent of Fustat and El Askar
6. Original Wall of El Kahira 10th Century
7. Extent of Fatimid Cairo
8. Surviving fragments of latter Medieval North and East Walls
9. Built-up area in 1800

[150] Janet Abu-Loghd. Cairo, An Islamic Metropolis. Archnet. Available at: http://www.archnet.org/library/pubdownloader/pdf/9583/doc/DPC1547.pdf. p.24. Web. 20 Nov. 2008

[151] Source: J. H. G. Lebon (1970) The Islamic City in The Near East: A Comparative Study of Cairo, Alexandria and Istanbul. *The Town Planning Review*. Vol.41, No. 2. p. 183

In fact, the shift to Mamluk rule was more than a mere change in dynasties. It symbolized, rather, a social revolution of grave importance. The elevation of the Mamluks into power saw through a flowering of Cairo as a medieval city, yet it contained within it the kernel of its own (and Cairo's) inevitable decline. Although Egypt has rarely been ruled by purely indigenous elements since the demise of the ancient Egyptian kingdoms, earlier conquerors had always assimilated with the population they ruled eventually.

> The Mamluks, on the other hand, remained a 'foreign' military caste, each generation recruited anew from abroad…As internal strife and external threats multiplied, the expansion of the city came to a temporary halt. The mirror image of the rise of Islam on the Anatolian plateau, signaled by the conquest of Constantinople in 1453 by the Ottoman Turks, represented a decline in Egypt's imperial wealth and autonomy. After the Ottoman conquest of Egypt in 1517, Cairo was reduced from its former status as centre of a vast empire to a mere provincial capital. Its talented cadre of architects and artisans were removed to Istanbul where they contributed to the transformation of that Byzantine Christian city into a magnificent Islamic capital. [152]

The essentiality of Misr Al Qadima as an integral segment of medieval Cairo was catapulted by the travelers that passed by the city at the time. Leos Africanus, who arrived in Cairo at the wake of the Ottoman invasion in 1517, describes Misr Al Qadima "as being "endowed with a fair number of artisans and merchants". He cites that the island of…Rawdah [now Manial], across from old Cairo, as "densely settled" and "[containing] approximately 1500 hearths"[153].

Henceforth, throughout the reigns of the Mamluks and Ottomans, and regardless of the ups and downs that the city had to vent through, the essentiality of Old Cairo as a vital part of Cairo remained largely intact. Up until the discovery of the Cape of Good

[152] Janet Abu-Loghd. Cairo, An Islamic Metropolis. Archnet. Available at: http://www.archnet.org/library/pubdownloader/pdf/9583/doc/DPC1547.pdf. p. 25-26. Web. 20 Nov. 2008
[153] Andre Raymond (2000) *Cairo*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. p. 187

Hope route in the 16th Century A.D., the transit trade route, connecting between Europe and Asia via North Africa in the Medieval and pre-modern phases, flourished gradually enhancing the importance of Al Fustat even further due to its central location as the main port on the banks on the Nile.

Old Cairo: The Habitat of *Ibn al-Balad*

As a matter of fact, tracing Old Cairo's politico-economic history does not only shed light on the constructional development of this section of the city, but it also helps in understanding the typologies of the residents that have dwelled within it. For instance, if we take a glimpse of the figure of *ibn al balad*, (a word that is usually used to describe a person belonging to the city and enjoying a certain stature of moral goodness, literally meaning "son of the country")[154], one notes that places like Old Cairo and other popular/traditional quarters of the city have actually served as the natural habitat for such figures. "Historically it was the Cairenes who were identified as *awlad al balad*. From the mid-thirteenth century Egypt was dominated in succession by Mamluks and Ottomans, for a brief interval by the French, then by Muhammad Ali's regime…It was in the face of these alien Cairo-based elements that the indigenous inhabitant sought to preserve and assert his particular identity"[155].

Traditionally, the locale of *ibn al balad* has been the popular quarter. Today when Egyptians refer to *awlad il balad*, it is usually in mention of those authentic and original

[154] Sawsan El Messiri (1978). *Ibn Al-Balad: A Concept of Egyptian Identity*. Leiden: E.J Brill. p.2-4. Here, El Messiri states that *ibn al balad* is characterized with "Gaiety, good humor mixed with sarcasm and cynicism, and a tendency to live for the moment". Other characteristics include "simplicity and goodness". *Ibn al balad* should also be "loyal to his country, love it and remain attached to it; unless a man is patriotic, he is not identified as a true *ibn al balad* … [He] also sees himself as being direct and simple in speech, not sophisticated".

[155] Ibid.

inhabitants of *al ahiyya' al sha`abeya* (folk/popular quarters). Being original inhabitants is quite vital here as it distinguishes *awlad al balad* from the *Sa`idis* that originate from Upper Egypt or the Fellahin whose roots are traced back to Lower Egypt. Thus, a regional/geographical element is largely influential in the features of *ibn al balad*, and it is often linked to the Cairene popular quarter. Of course Misr Al Qadima (Old Cairo) is one of the chief popular quarters of Cairo and is predominantly characterized as being a hub of *awlad al balad*. "These quarters are old and traditional…*awlad al balad* are found in these quarters, whereas one would not find *ibn al balad* in newer sections such as Zamalek or Garden City, because these quarters are inhabited largely by foreigners and westernized Egyptians, who are characterized by a different set of values and life-styles" [156].

Indeed what is referred to today as Misr Al Qadima is an amalgamation between some relatively modern neighborhoods (including `Ain Al Sira) which were constructed at a later stage in various points in the 19th and 20th Century and a traditional popular neighborhood which constructional and structural features have remained more or less the same since the medieval era. "The appearance of some of these quarters has not changed for centuries; some of the street plans are the original ones of Cairo. The streets in these quarters are divided into *harat* [small alleys], *darb utaf* [narrow streets], and *zuqaq* [bigger streets], which probably follow the original divisions"[157]. By and large, the heart of Cairo's traditional urbanism is in these districts which have been in existence the longest, that is, the quarters of medieval Cairo.

> However, not all of today's residents of these communities descend from inhabitants in the middle ages or even a century ago. The communities are

[156] Ibid, p.38
[157] Ibid, p.46

> changing constantly. While a sizable number of rural migrants come to settle, at the same time many of the older residents leave their quarters for more modern ones. But despite this mobility we find that whatever traditional activities still survive in Cairo are found chiefly in these old quarters.[158]

Today the term "*ibn al balad*" is still used in reference to a person with the aforementioned traits and geographical/historical ties with the popular quarters. Overall, the parallels between this popular figure and those of the *futuwwa* and the *beiytakabarlu* figures, introduced earlier in the course of Chapters I and II, are quite compelling, which reinforces the assumption that the lesser notabilities of today are indeed closely linked to such typologies of folk figures even further.

The Curse of the Dual City

In the beginning of the modern period of Egyptian history, usually associated with the Napoleonic French Expedition of 1798, Misr Al Qadima still constituted an integral part of the Cairene conglomerate. "After the French invasion of Egypt, the city was accurately described as composed of three distinct parts separated by agricultural land, Cairo the City and two suburbs, Boulack and Misr El-Kadima"[159]. However, the arrival of the 1798 Napoleonic Expedition brought the cycle of growth and expansion of old Cairo to a virtual halt, with the intrusion outlining a viaduct between a medieval Cairo that had aged and decayed and a modern Cairo that is yet to be. Abu-Loghd states that, "The *savants* who accompanied the brief occupation mapped the city, estimating its

[158] Ibid, p.57
[159] Mohammed F. Hussein "Potential Design For Mass Transportation in Egypt". A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The University of Michigan Industry Program, May 1965.

population at less than three hundred thousand. Although the French did not remain as colonizers, the processes of 'modernization' and 'reform' had begun".[160]

In the aftermath of the French expedition and the subsequent ascent of the Mohammed Ali dynasty to power, the importance of the older quarters of Cairo, Misr Al Qadima included, started fading out gradually. Mohammed Ali and his successors initiated a massive construction project aiming at building a modern city adjacent to the older quarters of Cairo, shifting the chief socioeconomic, political, and administrative functions that had been historically fulfilled by the older city to the novel urban conglomerate. Parallel to what has taken place elsewhere in other Third World colonized cities; the dual-city pattern eventually stripped the older quarters of wealthy inhabitants who flocked to mimic the new consumption patterns set forward by the colonizers.

> In the process, the older quarters became neglected and degraded, as new migrants from the countryside joined the poorer population left behind, subdividing the large homes of the departed rich into cubicles, unable to maintain them, and eventually spilling out to the cemeteries east and south-east of the city. All resources were devoted to paving the streets in the new quarters, to providing them with gaslights, piped water and even sewers. While the old quarters did not lose their important economic functions - handicrafts and the processing and distribution of foods - these products were increasingly purveyed to people of similar social standing.[161]

Hence, the degradation of Misr Al Qadima and other districts in the milieu of old Cairo was a happening reality throughout the 19th Century and up until the outset of the 20th Century.

19th Century Cairo: The Tale of Two Cities

With the rise of Khedive Ismail, Mohammed Ali's grandson, to power, the foundations of modern Cairo were being thoroughly being planned. Ismail had a deep

[160] Janet Abu-Loghd. Cairo, An Islamic Metropolis. Archnet. Available at: http://www.archnet.org/library/pubdownloader/pdf/9583/doc/DPC1547.pdf. p.27. Web. 20 Nov. 2008
[161] Ibid, p.28

fascination with European culture, in general, and it is in this milieu that he spearheaded the establishment of a modern Cairo on the outskirts of the old one, with the goal of turning it into a London or a Paris of the East. Modern (western) architectural plans were put forward by pioneering European architects and a lavish budget was secured by the Khedive to ensure the successful completion of his venture. Indeed this came at the expense of the older quarters, accentuating the theme of divisions and the dual-city pattern cited above. Roughly, it is at this point that old Cairo lost its practical meaningfulness as a vital part of the city. "Limited in space, relatively overcrowded, and structured according to a different principle of urban life, the old city offered neither a suitable ground for the new urbanism nor accommodations for a fresh influx of residents".[162] The inevitable divisions that took place and were pursued thereafter, made the importance of the older quarters of Cairo only symbolic; a mere arena where the desire to restore and preserve the heritage of the city can take place, rather than an area that has a pragmatic role to play in the course of the new phase that was in the making at the time[163].

In reality, these older quarters, Misr Al Qadima included, were in dire need of proper revamping and improvement rather than negligence. The features of this deterioration could be described as follows:

> Its streets were neglected, cleaning was haphazard, water supply was only partial, and the sewers were poor or insufficient. The deterioration of these quarters was exacerbated by the rapid increase in population whose density weighed heavily on the crumbling infrastructure and inadequate public services. Between 1882 and 1927, the population of the four districts that constituted the old city…grew from 122,411 to 259,535 an increase of 112 percent…Old Cairo [grew] from 22,518 to 49,495…This population was particularly poor…The old quarters were tending to

[162] Andre Raymond (2000). *Cairo*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. p.309.
[163] Paula Sanders (2008). *Creating Medieval Cairo*. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press.

> become a refuge for the most downtrodden and recently arrived segments of the population.[164]

Therefore with this apparent segregation, the fortunes of the traditional quarters of Cairo appeared to be inversely proportional to the expansion and modernization of the newer sections of the city. The more attention and care the modern part receives, the more neglected and abandoned the older part becomes.

Modes of Production and Informal Networks in 19th Century Cairo

There is indeed a particular importance for the modes of production of the guild members and craft workers who constituted the bulk of the labor force in Cairo's old (popular) quarters at the time of the inception of modern Cairo and continue to formulate the prime section of the working population of these quarters perhaps until today. A distinctive case here is the demise of the guild-system in 1911, which happened as a result of an ongoing tension between the state and the craftsmen and artisans, who considered the guilds to be a tool in the hands of the state, aiming at co-opting those segments of the community, rather than representing them. "Where attempts to engage the state officially through formal and collective claim making failed, guild members and crafts workers often resorted to more illicit "weapons of the weak", dodging taxes, subverting regulations, creating unofficial networks, and bribing officials. Crafts workers' mobilization played a significant role in bringing down their guilds"[165]

Interestingly, the collapse of the guild system in the late 19th/ early 20th Century was accompanied with some sort of confrontation between the state and a category of popular figures of authority that are somehow similar to the Lesser Notables, the

[164] Andre Raymond (2000). *Cairo*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. p.333.
[165] John Chalcraft (2005). *The Striking Cabbies in Cairo: Crafts and Guilds in Egypt*, 1863-1914.State University of New York Press. p.67

typology of sociopolitical agents that this study attempts to scrutinize. At that particular juncture, the official discourse of the state had stopped recognizing and approving the local autonomies of sheikh-like activities in the trades, which were then considered as "backward", "tyrannical", and "malignant". As a result, these local figures had to evade the various forms of state-control that started appearing at the time. For the state, the prevalence of these sheikh-like figures of authority on the popular level was against the scheme of modernity that was adopted by the state-apparatus.

> Indeed such local figures were not sanctioned by state regulations, which they often sought to undermine or transform in one way or another. In addition, the crafts and services trade were undergoing rapid sociological change. The speedy growth of completely new trades such as cab driving and the attrition of others, the drift to countryside of textiles on the one hand, and significant rural-urban migration on the other, and the increased participation of women meant that many in the trades in the early 1900's had no established links to a prior tradition of shaikhly authority in a trade.[166]

Thus, with the induction of the modern (arguably authoritarian) state and the subsequent resilient "informal-ism" that was developed on the part of the guild activists in order to offset the attempts of the state to overtake their guilds, a relatively novel scope of socioeconomic and political relations was in the making between the state and those lesser notabilities.

Cairo in the Postwar Period

By the post World War II period (1945 onwards), a clear-cut divide was firmly established between the modern and the pre-modern sections of the city, with a plethora of modern industrial technologies of transportation and communication all introduced and based in the newly developed quarters, leaving the older parts lagging behind in terms of infrastructure and technology. Along with the gradual segregation of the city, a

[166] Ibid, p.157

residential rift that is based on income level, job occupation and social class was also on the rise. "In any city, the precise location of low-income settlement will depend on the location of jobs and also the residential preferences of the affluent, since the latter can usually preempt any location they choose. In both respects, trends in Cairo seem to be broadly exemplary".[167] Indeed Misr Al Qadima district belongs to the category of the older quarters, where low-income housing is prevalent. Expanding on the already existing potential of the area as a household of craftsmen and skilled and unskilled labor, due to the historic skin tannery workshops and the other crafts that were homegrown in Misr Al Qadima for centuries, the district considerably grew into one of the main housing locations for occupational groups of manual labor. In this regard, Misr Al Qadima is no exception when compared to the rest of Cairo's districts which have all witnessed a clear trend of residential segregation that is based on socioeconomic standings. Looking at the statistical data below, this point is actually reaffirmed.

Table # 3.a: Residential Segregation of Occupation Groups in the Cairo Urban Region, 1960-1986 (15 years and above)[168]

Occupation Groups	1960	1986	1960-86(change)
Skilled & Unskilled Labor	0.258	0.262	0.004
Administrative & Managerial	0.401	0.444	0.043

[167] Richard Harris and Malak Wahba (2002). The Urban Geography of Low-Income Housing: Cairo (1947-96) Exemplifies a Model. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*. Vol.26.1, March.
[168] Source: Ibid. In this context, the Index of segregation is "the most commonly used statistic. This has the useful property of varying between zero and unity so that it can be interpreted as a percentage…In class terms; Cairo is a highly segregated city". Here, the closer the percentage to the number 1, the higher residential segregation there is, where 1 indicates a full segregation in residence and 0 indicates no segregation whatsoever. When we say that the index of segregation of the Administrative & Managerial Professionals is 0.444, it implies that 44.4 % of this occupational group has to move from their places of residence in order for there to be no segregation.

While containing the largest enduring remnants of any medieval Middle Eastern city, today Misr Al Qadima, alongside the other sections of the old city, is actually being dwarfed by the massive urban conglomerate that now encircles it on all sides. "The population has declined, not only because residences have crumbled from age, but also because they are being destroyed by natural events (the recent earthquake) and the works of man (new highways and tunnels [and] new colonies of informal settlements"[169].

Misr Al Qadima Today: Socioeconomic and Political Indicators

Misr Al Qadima The neighborhood: Misr Qadima proper and `Ain Al Sirra

This section aims at dissecting the contemporary demographic profile of Misr Al Qadima. In doing so, one notes that this area suffers from social disparities which render it on the lower echelons of Cairo's various districts, in terms of income distribution and education. Furthermore, a plethora of other socioeconomic and political features stand out, making this area a fertile ground for the flourishing of the sort of the socioeconomic and political agency that is typically filled by what is referred to as the "lesser notables" in the context of this research.

Today the area that is referred to as "Misr Al Qadima" is mainly an aggregation of two chief sections upon which the 400,000 inhabitants of Misr Al Qadima are almost equally distributed. First, there is the older part of this district (Misr Al Qadima proper), which consists of the old popular quarter that has been there for hundreds of years. Most of the buildings in the neighborhood are either ancient constructional establishments, some of which were actually consolidated by the state as monumental buildings, forcing

[169] Janet Abu-Loghd. Cairo, An Islamic Metropolis. Archnet. Available at: http://www.archnet.org/library/pubdownloader/pdf/9583/doc/DPC1547.pdf. p.27

the inhabitants to relocate their residence, or relatively newer buildings made of red brick and other basic materials; and those were built on the remnants of the older/historical constructional sites over various periods in the timeline of the popular quarter. Overall, there is scarcely any constructional activity that has taken place in the old quarter since the onset of the 20th Century. A lot of the streets are quite narrow and somehow irregular in design, making the mobility of modern vehicles impractical in various parts of the quarter.[170]

We do not have at hand an empirical study relating to the historical origin of the inhabitants of the old quarter. However, on aggregate and depending on interviews with a multitude of locals that reside within that quarter, it could be argued that the residents of this part of Misr Al Qadima are comparatively homogenous; what Cairenes refer to as "*awlad al balad*" or people that trace their origin to the same neighborhood within which they reside, considering themselves to be the original inhabitants of Cairo. This first hand observation is indeed reemphasized as one notes that the kind of rural/urban migration that swapped a wide variety of popular quarters in Cairo was not actually that apparent in Misr Al Qadima proper. Some of the chief professions that still flourish in the area, such as skin tannery for example, have been there for hundreds of years and a sizable portion of the population is involved in this industry or the commercial activities relating to it, one way or another.[171]

[170] Ahmed Abdallah and Ahmed Siam(1996). *Al Mosharaka Al Sha'beya Fi Hay Ain Al Sira Bel Qahera*. Cairo: Al Jeel Center.

[171] Interviews with Misr Qadima residents from the old quarter; June-August 2008; In addition to the fact that most of the respondents considered themselves as '*awlad balad*', those respondents also echoed the observation that the majority of the residents of the old quarter also belong to the same category of inhabitants, meaning that their roots could be traced back to the same area within which they reside.

On the other hand, `Ain Al Sirra, the second main constituent of Misr Al Qadima which is now home for more than 150,000 inhabitants, tells a somewhat different tale. This neighborhood was established in the late 1950's in the scope of the Nasserite socialist project at the time, which targeted the enhancement of the living condition of the low/middle income level groups, in order to provide such segments with state-subsidized housing. There were initially 140 blocks of residential units, with an average of 60 apartment buildings in each block. In the late 1960's additional blocks were also constructed to supply housing for the growing population of the area.[172]

Accordingly, since its inception, `Ain Al Sirra was characterized with a relatively heterogeneous population, in terms of geographical, social and professional backgrounds. Along with the sizable portion of rural migrants that settled in the area coming from various provinces, especially from Upper Egypt, this area was also home for a plethora of socioeconomic segments, including, working class residents, petty bourgeoisie segments of small to medium size merchants, as well as middle class professionals, such as school teachers and government employees. The 1960's witnessed the heydays of the neighborhood due to the relative social mobility granted to the various segments of the society at the time with the widespread subsidization of education and the tendency of the state to guarantee employment to young university graduates, whether within the ranks of the government or in the public sector. Furthermore, the Nasserite welfare state also provided popular neighborhoods with cooperative outlets along with a set of other

[172]Ahmed Abdallah and Ahmed Siam(1996). *Al Mosharaka Al Sha'beya Fi Hay Ain Al Sira Bel Qahera*. Cairo: Al Jeel Center.

government agencies, which supplied the neighborhood with the basic goods and services at subsidized rates.[173]

However, with the adoption of *infitah* policies from 1974 onwards, the entire neighborhood was subject to dire conditions, in line with most of Cairo's popular quarters at that period. State subsidies were gradually withdrawn and, in short, the preferential treatment that was given to `Ain Al Sira was virtually abolished. One of the immediate consequences to the relative withdrawal of the state from the polity of the neighborhood, was the attempts made by a lot of the residents to re-design and expand their own houses, in order to suffice for the increasing growth in population accompanied with the relative shrinking in income and the massive surge in the prices of new housing in the late 1970's. From the late 1970's onwards, the manifestations of state withdrawal from the affairs of `Ain Al Sira widened to include ongoing deteriorations in the infrastructure of the neighborhood (basic utilities, sanitation, roads…etc), an increasing number of irregularities exercised by the residents in absence of state regulation, and a general sentiment of distrust and rejection towards the state among the inhabitants of the area. In practical terms, the state has let them down.[174] On aggregate, a wide array of alterations in the socioeconomic and political features of the neighborhood came about as byproducts of the 1970s's open door then the 1990's liberalization policies, which will be discerned in more detail in the upcoming section.

Socioeconomic and Political Indicators

A recent study conducted on the residents of Misr Al Qadima revealed that roughly two thirds of its population lived under the poverty line. The percentage of those

[173] Ibid.
[174] Ibid and interviews with Misr Qadima locals

living under 1 dollar a day was almost 60% of the total population. Approximately 30 % of the people of Misr Al Qadima live on 1-2 dollars a day, leaving only 10% of the inhabitants of the area with an average income that exceeds 2 dollars a day.[175] Looking at the rates of education and illiteracy, we observe that, on aggregate, the rate of illiteracy is almost 29 % among those that are 10 years and above, which is a significantly higher rate than the overall average for the Governorate of Cairo which stood at 19.3 % for the same portion of the population. This relatively humble rate will be rather reflected later on as we dissect the level of political awareness of the "formal" political institutions in the upcoming section. Unemployment rate also reached 16.7 % of the total population (15 years and above) which is again fairly higher than the average unemployment rate within the same age group for the entirety of Cairo which was 10.78%.

Table # 3.b: Literacy and Education in Misr Al Qadima area (10 years and above)[176]

Illiterate		Literate but no qualification		Graduate of elementary or middle school		High School Certificate		University Degree		Graduate Degree		Total	
No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
52,411	28.97	17,540	9.7	33,500	18.5	43,300	24	32,706	18.1	1,315	0.73	180,903	100

Table # 3.c: Literacy and Education in all of Cairo (10 years and above)[177]

Illiterate		Literate but no qualification		Graduate of elementary or middle school		High School Certificate		University Degree		Graduate Degree		Total	
No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1,085745	19.31	501,437	8.92	1,128250	20.01	1,738100	30.9	1,126187	20.03	41,091	0.73	5,623654	100

[175] Khaled Abdelfatth (2007). Report on The Study of The Political Participation & Awareness of The People of Misr Al Qadima & Dar Essalam. Political & Legal Awareness Project, New Fostat NGO. p.5
[176] Source: Table # 4, "Distribution of Population According to Gender & Educational Status", 2006 National Census of Egypt, Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS), Cairo, 2007
[177] Ibid

Table # 3.d: Unemployment in Misr Al Qadima and all of Cairo (15 years and above: working age population)[178]

Location	Population	Formal Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Unemployment rate
Misr Al Qadima	162,697	70,523	60,745	34,778	19.7 %
Cairo	5,034481	2,223992	1,984,231	504,061	10.78 %

In terms of the distribution of labor over the various sectors of economic activities, the figures of a relatively sizable informal sector more or less coincided with the average rates for the Governorate of Cairo as a whole. In Misr Al Qadima the portion of the labor force belonging to the informal sector constituted an estimated 40 % of the total labor force. Although 97,569 of those aged 15 years and above were labeled as "unattached", or not belonging to a formal categorization of economic sectors or job typologies, only 34,778 of them were considered to be unemployed, which leaves us with more than 60,000 people employed in the category of the informal sector. In the course of this research the informal employment shall be defined, basically, as any employment that is not covered by either a legal contract or social insurance.[179] Indeed the aforementioned figure does not vary a great deal from the overall average for the informal sector laborers within Cairo which was circa 50 % of the overall population of employed labor.[180]

[178] Source: Table #7, "Labor Force in the Cairo Governorate", 2006 National Census of Egypt, Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS), Cairo, 2007

[179] Ragui Assaad (2007)."Labor Supply, Employment, and Unemployment in the Egyptian Economy". Working Paper 0701. Cairo: Economic Research Forum.

[180] Sayed Attia (2009) "The Informal Economy as an Engine for Poverty Reduction and Development in Egypt" *MPRA* Paper No. 13034. According to this study, "In 1991 informal enterprises was estimated to reach 2.28 million…The informal economy constitutes approximately 40% of the total economy …Furthermore, some surveys estimated that the volume of informal enterprises (entrepreneurs) in Egypt by 1.4 million with a percentage of 82% of the total economic activities. The informal sector absorbs nearly 8.2 million workers with a percentage of 40% of the total labor force in Egypt".

In a recent study analyzing the Egypt Labor Market Panel Survey (ELMPS 06), a follow-up survey to the Egypt Labor Market Survey of 1998 (ELMS 98) which was carried out in November-December 1998 by the Economic Research Forum (ERF), it was noted that the size of the informal economy in Egypt is on the rise relative to its formal counterpart. "Concurrent with the decline of employment opportunities in the public sector, the trend toward informalisation of the labor market, which begun in the 1990s, is continuing unabated. By 2006, 61 percent of all employment was informal, up from 57 percent in 1998. Moreover, 75 percent of new entrants who entered the labor market in the first five years of this decade were entering into informal work."[181]

Table # 3.e: Employment in Economic activity by sector in Misr Al Qadima [182]

[181] Ragui Assaad (2007). "Labor Supply, Employment, and Unemployment in the Egyptian Economy" Working Paper 0701. Cairo: Economic Research Forum.

[182] Source: Table #7, "Labor Force in the Cairo Governorate", 2006 National Census of Egypt, Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS), Cairo, 2007. The following table represents the keys for the economic activities by sector;

A	Agriculture
B	Mining
C	Middle & Complementary Industries
D	Electricity & Gas
E	Water Supplies, Sanitation, & Recycling
F	Building & Construction
G	Wholesale & Retail Trading
H	Storage & Transportation
I	Food & Beverage Catering
J	Information & Communication
K	Insurance & Financial Intermediaries
L	Real Estate
M	Specialist Scientific & Technical Services
N	Administrative Services
O	Civil Defense & Public Services
P	Education
Q	Health
R	Arts & Entertainment
S	other services
T	Private housekeeping services
U	International Agencies & Organizations, Embassies…etc
V	Economic activities that are formal yet not fully categorized
W	Unspecified
X	Total

Economic Activity by sector	Population Employed	Economic Activity by sector	Population Employed	Economic Activity by sector	Population Employed	Economic Activity by sector	Population Employed
A	197	G	11,261	M	2,049	S	4,683
B	67	H	4,519	N	702	T	745
C	11,569	I	1,895	O	5,222	U	34
D	388	J	1,354	P	3,802	V	1,245
E	263	K	1,542	Q	2,431	W	1,358
F	9,416	L	53	R	333	X	65,128
Total Unattached		97,569		Grand Total		162,697	

Table # 3.f: Employment in Economic Activity by sector in all of Cairo[183]

Economic Activity by sector	Population Employed	Economic Activity by sector	Population Employed	Economic Activity by sector	Population Employed	Economic Activity by sector	Population Employed
A	8,212	G	419,759	M	83,571	S	70,979
B	2,484	H	153,309	N	26,965	T	29,512
C	306,232	I	52,083	O	189,807	U	1,384
D	22,157	J	46,221	P	164,602	V	78,867
E	12,829	K	41,373	Q	65,778	W	49,208
F	191,899	L	2,082	R	11,705	X	2,031,018
Total Unattached		3,003463		Grand Total		5,034481	

Table # 3.g: Population by desegregation of Jobs in Misr Al Qadima [184]

I	II	III	IV	V	VI	Total
VII	VIII	IX	Unspecified	Total	Unattached	
3,817	12,119	5,178	2,850	9,557	102	
18,105	5,826	6,127	1,447	65,128	97,569	162,697

[183] Note that despite the fact that the recorded rate of unemployment in Misr Al Qadima was circa 20 %; more than 60 % of the total labor force was labeled as "unattached" or unsuitable to be put under any formal classification of job occupancy. This reflects the considerable size of the informal sector which absorbs an estimate of 35-40% of the total labor force.

[184] Source: Table # 9, "Distribution of Population According to Gender & Typology of Jobs", 2006 National Census of Egypt, Central Agency for Public Mobilization & Statistics (CAPMAS), Cairo, 2007
The following table represents the key for the typology of jobs;

I	Legislators & Senior Administrators
II	Specialists of certain scientific skills
III	Technicians & Specialist Aides
IV	Writers
V	Employees in services, shops, and supermarkets
VI	Skilled labor in agriculture and hunting
VII	Artisans
VIII	Skilled labor in factories and medium and small industries
IX	Ordinary (unskilled) & Wage labor

Table # 3.h: Population by desegregation of Jobs in all of Cairo

I	II	III	IV	V	VI	Total
VII	VIII	IX	Unspecified	Total	Unattached	
154,627	483,906	225,218	127,685	324,461	5,611	
360,358	178,646	160,085	55,421	2,031018	3,003463	5,034481

With regard to the economic activities and the typologies of jobs that flourish within Misr Al Qadima, one observes that sectors C (Middle and Complementary Industries), G (Wholesale and Retail Trading) and F (Building and Construction) were the prime economic sectors, absorbing more than 32,000 laborers (approximately 44 % of the labor force within the formal sector) combined. The exact same sectors also occupy the first three slots in terms of labor population in the Governorate of Cairo as a whole, with an approximation of 45 % of the aggregate labor belonging to the formal sector. This reflects the relative growth of these sectors of economic activities nationwide as a result of the Open Door then liberalization policies of the 1970's and the 1990's, which meant that an expansion in intermediary economic activities (construction contracting, wholesale and retail trading…etc) was well in place to accompany the overriding macroeconomic features of that phase.[185]

For example, within the context of the building and construction sectors, a firm expansion in scope and magnitude was quite inevitable with the surge in construction activities in mostly all of Egypt with the rise of *infitah* and during the post October 1973 war phase.[186] With that came a sizable shortage in the supply of the workers and contractors within that sector due to the increase in skilled labor migration to the Gulf

[185] Chapters I and II of this research dealt extensively with the concept of *inifitah* and its effect on the socioeconomic class stratification and social mobility.

[186]Ragui Assaad (2007). "Labor Supply, Employment, and Unemployment in the Egyptian Economy" Working Paper 0701, Cairo: Economic Research Forum. Here, Assaad cites that in between 1988-2006, the construction sector also grew faster than average at a rate of 5.9 percent per annum, to capture an 8 percent share of total employment in 2006

States and the increasing demand on this type of labor in the post *infitah* era. The issue was quite grave to the extent that the Egyptian government had to sponsor the establishment of the Training Organization of Ministry of Housing and Construction (TOMOHAR) in 1975 to train and supply entrants to the construction sector.[187]

Fouad Soltan, Egypt's Minister of Tourism at the juncture of ERSAP and one of the key advocates of the liberalization policies clearly states that the Open Door policy contributed greatly to the: "rise in commercial activities at the expense of productive ones. It is not the private sector that is responsible for this tendency, but the government that failed to follow a correct and clear economic policy able of encouraging productive activity"[188]. On aggregate, the post *infitah* years were characterized by the increase of financial and commercial activities, especially importation, at the expense of industrial activities. "Starting from 1974, structural change in the Egyptian economy enhanced the growth of the non-traded goods and services sector of the economy at the expense of the traded commodity sector"[189]. Within the milieu of job typologies, artisans and employees in services, shops, and supermarkets roughly accounted for 25 % of the total labor force within the formal sector in Misr Al Qadima, again signifying the importance of these typologies in this municipality.

Apart from the previously estimated 40-45% of the labor force within the informal sector, an accurate indication of the size and influence of this sector remains a vastly dubious process. Yet, in spite of the lack of accurate data pertaining to the informal sector and henceforth the difficulty in analyzing it as an economic sector, the estimate of

[187] Ragui Assaad (1993). "Formal & Informal Institutions in the Labor Market with Application to the Construction Sector in Egypt" *World Development*. Vol.21. No. 6. p. 925-39.
[188] Samer Soliman (1998). State & Industrial Capitalism in Egypt. *Cairo Papers in Social Science*. Vol. 21, No. 2. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press.
[189] Ibid, p.12-13

its sheer size in Misr Al Qadima reflects its immense role in its polity, as will be displayed later in the course of the socioeconomic attributions of the lesser notabilities. Indeed the considerable scope of the informal sector carries noteworthy implications for the popular quarters of Cairo, Misr Al Qadima included. "By its nature the informal sector is characterized by ease of entry and low productivity. The first feature explains why this sector has accounted for the bulk of job creation in the recent past. On the other hand, the low productivity implies relatively lower wages; compared to the formal sector…The recently observed phenomenon of increasing urban poverty can be explained in terms of such structure".[190] Therefore, despite the fact that the continuously growing informal sector is in reality absorbing a sizable segment of the labor force, the meaningfulness of its role in alleviating poverty remains quite questionable. More often than not, the informal sector seems like the easy way out for the unskilled and the uneducated labor, and, apparently, the state does not often bother with the sort of training received or skills acquired by those that enter the informal sector as they are seemingly employed and generate income, however minimal.

Misr Al Qadima is no exception to the aforementioned, and despite the shortage of verifiable data on the growth of the informal sector in this area over the past years, the incremental expansion of this sector is practically observable. With the adoption of ERSAP in 1990's and the ongoing privatization and subsequent contraction of

[190] Ali A.G. and A. Elbadawi (2002). "Poverty and The Labor Market in The Arab World" In *Employment Creation & Social Protection in The Middle East & North Africa*. ed. Heba Handoussa and Zafiris Tzannatos.Cairo: Economic Research Forum, American University in Cairo Press. p.183

government and public sector employment,[191] a sizable portion of the labor force in the area was actually forced to either retire completely or join the informal sector:

> Employment growth in the civil service has slowed dramatically and much of the burden of employment creation has shifted to the private sector…The public sector[']s share of total employment] has contracted significantly in relative terms, from 39 percent in 1998 to 30 percent in 2006. In fact, the public enterprise has continued a trend of absolute decline; at a rate of 0.2 percent per annum…Private sector employment has been growing in excess of 7 percent per annum, with the most dynamic growth being observed in informal regular wage employment and employment in household enterprise.[192]

Indeed in Misr Al Qadima, the accounts of the inhabitants tell dozens of stories about a wide variety of candy and cigarette kiosks, street vendors, and even sometimes house maintenance boutiques, that all operate without license or government approval and which have all been increasingly observable only over the past decade or so.

When looking at the internal migration rates, one also finds that Misr Al Qadima has a relatively high rate of internal migration to other districts in Cairo and in Egypt, when compared to other districts within Cairo. In 2006 the average rate of the labor force relocated from within Misr Al Qadima was 20 % of the total labor force, which is considerably higher than other districts within Cairo (The overall rate of internal labor force relocation within the entire governorate stood at 15 % of the total labor force).[193] A logical justification for that relatively higher rate of internal migration would of course relate to the scarcity of employment opportunities within the area and the resultant tendency of the labor force to move to other areas looking for jobs.

[191] Ragui Assaad and Melanie Arntz (2005) "Constrained Geographical Mobility And Gendered Labor Market Outcomes Under Structural Adjustment: Evidence From Egypt". *World Development*. Vol. 33, No 3. p.438.
[192] Ragui Assaad (2007) "Labor Supply, Employment, and Unemployment in the Egyptian Economy" Working Paper 0701. Cairo: Economic Research Forum.
[193] Source: Table # 15, "Egyptian Internal Migration by Motivation", 2006 National Census of Egypt, Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS), Cairo, 2007.

The abovementioned figures of internal migration are in fact applicable to those that are 15 years of age and above. Looking at the previous data for this portion of the population in Misr Al Qadima district, compared to the average of the Cairo Governorate as a whole, we will find that, in Misr Al Qadima, the rate of internal migration stands roughly at 11.1% which is lower than an approximate 16% in the whole of Cairo. However, those that left Misr Qadima due to permanent labor migration constitute an approximate 30 % of all of those that migrated out of the boundaries of the district for various reasons (study, marriage/divorce…etc.) which is a higher rate than the average for Cairo for the same segment, which only stood almost at 23% of the total number of those migrating out of Cairo.[194]

Despite the lack of accurate data, here it is noteworthy to mention that Misr Al Qadima has also witnessed a sizable a rate of immigration to the area throughout various phases in its modern history. The main bulk of immigrants to the area have settled in `Ain Al Sira, the newer section of Misr Al Qadima, in the height of the wave of rural/urban migration that targeted Cairo in the 1950's and 1960's. For the most part, immigrants to the area came from the Sa`id (Upper Egypt) and ended up establishing strong ties of clanship and solidarity among the members of their respective families. The impact of this scope of solidarity will be further portrayed and scrutinized in the context of chapters IV and V, as the researcher attempts to scrutinize the lesser notabilities of Misr Al Qadima.[195]

[194]Ibid
[195]Ibid and Interviews with Misr Qadima locals.

Political Indicators: Contextualizing the Polity of Misr Al Qadima

As one delves into the intricate details of the polity of Misr Al Qadima, an overview of the profile of political awareness and participation in the area is indeed vital. The area that is known today as Misr Al Qadima is in fact an amalgamation of two main sections; the first is the old (historical) quarter of Old Cairo that has been erect for hundreds of years as mentioned earlier. The second and relatively more recent part (*`Ain Al Sira*) was constructed during the reign of Nasser in the late 1950's in the context of the trend of building *al masaken sha`beya* or the popular neighborhoods, which aimed, at the time, to provide affordable state-subsidized housing for the lower and lower-middle classes. With the gradual withering away of the social welfare system initially introduced by the Nasser regime with the advent of Sadat and the *infitah* policies of the 1974, the neighborhood in its entirety started to deteriorate considerably in terms of services and infrastructure. Furthermore, the subsidies that were granted by the state to the residents, in order to wave the rent and the other utility bills paid by the inhabitants, were cancelled by the mid 1970's.

Consequently, two main features colored the socio-economic structure of Misr Al Qadima, and many other popular quarters in Cairo at the time. First, a sizable wave of migration of youth to the GCC states was underway, coinciding with the oil boom of the 1970's, which led to a an apparent drain in all kinds of skilled labor in the area, and of course in a lot of other areas of Cairo at the time. The surge in this trend was so high that, for example, in one of the blocks (small apartment buildings), seven out of the ten young men living in the building all eventually travelled to the GCC[196].

[196] Ahmed Abdallah and Ahmed Siam (1996). *Al Mosharaka Al Sha'beya Fi Hay Ain Al Sira Bel Qahera*. Cairo: Al Jeel Center.

Second, and despite the nominal stature that the educated (university graduates) of the area upheld as the "intellectual" grouping, the scarcity of the skilled labor in the aftermath of the wave of the GCC migration, actually made this clique of laborers; electricians, plumbers, and construction workers…etc the de facto elite (notables) of the community. And, gradually, it seemed that some alteration in the value-system of a large portion of the people of the area was a happening reality with regard to the importance of profit-making as a prime litmus test in judging the credibility and stature of the person. The word "*kasseeb*" (a person that is talented in making profit quickly) became almost equivalent to doctor or professor.[197]

These features have indeed influenced the scheme of political participation in the area. In the 1980's the state had already initiated a façade of democracy by allowing three parties to operate, most powerful of which was indeed the state-sponsored NDP. By and large, the people of the area, who have been historically politicized since the times of Nasser (The actual patron that practically housed those people in Misr Al Qadima), were naturally sympathetic with the left-leaning *Tagamou`* party, which was the party that somehow championed the socialist and populist policies that the people of a district like Misr Al Qadima would support. Another viable venue for activism and participation also was *Gam`eyat Tanmiat al-mogtama`* (Community Development Society), a multifaceted service center that was run by volunteer activists –from various political backgrounds- and which provided the neighborhood with a wide variety of health and educational services. However, since 1980's and onwards, the influence of the secular and leftist

[197] Ibid.

political forces started giving way to the various Islamist groups that were clearly on the rise since then.[198]

Despite some of the humble efforts that the leftist and secular activists are still attempting to carry out through the Community Development Society and other similar service centers, the playground for political action has been massively controlled by the Islamists with some competition from the NDP. The amount of resources and networks channeled and orchestrated by these two factions and the considerable power and influence that they subsequently posses makes it practically impossible for any other party or group of activists to stand in their face. In the context of the upcoming chapters, there shall be a thorough look into the machinations of the political Islamists and the NDP in Misr Al Qadima.

Misr Al Qadima Today

A study carried out on a random sample of approximately 1500 inhabitants aged 18 years and above, from varying age groups and socioeconomic classes, sheds some light on the political realities of Misr Al Qadima. According to this study 55% of those surveyed perceived themselves as being politically uninterested, while only 13.3% had what was described by the study as a "relatively high level of political awareness", compared to 32.1% in the middle range of political awareness and 39.3% with a relatively low level of political awareness. Roughly 15% of the surveyed had very little or no political awareness at all.[199] Amending the Constitution came first as the prime

[198] Ibid and Interviews with Misr Qadima locals, Cairo, June-August 2008
[199]The indicator of the degree of political awareness was measured according to the ability of the respondents to answer for a set of questions covering various political issues, on the local as well as the

issue of political reform with 27.5% considering it so, and after it came the dilemma of the low level of political participation which was considered by 9% of the respondents as the chief political challenge facing the country today, then came the political turmoil in the Middle East and the lack of democracy with 8 and 6.5% respectively. Only 6% identified political corruption as being the chief political challenge confronting the area and the country as a whole.[200]

Concerning formal political participation, 35% didn't participate politically whatsoever, and 64.2% had some sort of minimal political participation. Only 17% of the sample held valid voting cards and participated in the 2007 parliamentary elections, whilst 2% had some sort of association or membership in a political party or organization. The main motivation driving the majority of the respondents to join political entities was, primarily, having friends and relatives in the political party; this being the rationale cited by 20.5% of the political parties' members. Among the other reasons cited for joining political parties and organizations, was the expected benefit and services that are likely to be provided to the prospective member. Here, it is also noteworthy that over 25% of all those enrolled in parties belonged to the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP), with the rest of the respondent members scattered among other political parties.[201]

Political bribery was cited by a sizable portion of the respondents as a reality happening in the Misr Al Qadima district. While 45% of the residents reckoned that the voters usually go for the candidate that pays more for their votes, and 44.4% considered

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international level, in addition to a questionnaire on the main political institutions on the governorate and the country level (The Municipal Councils, The Parliament, The Cabinet…etc).

[200] Khaled Abdelfattah (2007). Report on The Study of The Political Participation & Awareness of The People of Misr Al Qadima & Dar Essalam. Political & Legal Awareness Project, New Fostat NGO. p.6

[201] Ibid.

the ability of the candidate to provide services to the people of the area as the main rationale for voters selecting their prospective representatives in the municipal and judicial councils.[202]

Importantly, the aforementioned study reveals also that there is a correlation between the demography of Misr Qadima, in terms of housing, income level, degree of education…etc, and the level of political awareness and participation of its people. In Misr Al Qadima, on aggregate, political participation and awareness is less among the female population, the uneducated, the elderly, and the low-income earners.[203]

Table # 3.i: Participation in civil society organizations in Misr Al Qadima

Activity	Percentage
Membership in NGOs	0.9 %
Membership in unions and syndicates	5.7 %
Membership in political parties	2 %

Table # 3.j: Political Participation by Gender

Level of Political Participation	Percentage among the Male population	Percentage among the Female population	Total Percentage
Negligible or non-existent	29.4 %	44.4 %	35.3 %
Weak	70 %	55.1 %	64.2 %
Average	0.6 %	0.5 %	0.55 %

Table # 3.k: Components indicating the level of political awareness and the percentage of awareness of each component among the surveyed population

Component	Percentage
Name of the Speaker of the Parliament	62.1 %
Name of the Prime Minister	54.2 %
No. of Members of Parliament	14.9 %
Main opposition in Parliament	20 %
Names of the district deputies in Parliament	44 %
Definition of the Constitution	7.5 %
Role of the Local Municipal Council	5.7 %

[202] Tables 10, 11, and 12 are all cited from the Report on The Study of The Political Participation & Awareness of The People of Misr Al Qadima & Dar Essalam. Political & Legal Awareness Project, New Fostat NGO, July 2007, Cairo
[203] Ibid, p.22

A researcher that was involved in the conduction of the cited report stated, after some sizable work on the area of Misr Qadima, that perhaps the most important outcome of the project that led up to this report was establishing an indicator, a coefficient if you will, for measuring the levels of political awareness and participation.[204] It was quite novel for such an indicator to be generated and applied on a popular quarter in Cairo, and thus could be considered as the most important achievement that was reached working on the Misr Qadima area. The methodology that was followed depended on targeting random samples from different socio-economic classes and then addressing the survey questions that aim at measuring their level of political awareness and participation to them. Another interesting finding, also, was the directly proportional relationship that was noted between the level of income and education and the degree of political awareness.

When it comes to political participation, common wisdom would suggest that, on aggregate, in a country like Egypt political participation –which is mainly defined by partaking in the electoral voting process- is primarily the domain of the lesser socio-economic classes, owing to their dire conditions and the expected benefits which they could reap as a result of their participation. By the same token, the relationship between a relatively higher degree of awareness/socioeconomic class and the level of political participation is not necessarily directly proportional. This could be mainly attributed to the skepticism that such comparatively higher classes would expectedly hold towards the meaningfulness of political participation as an effective tool of pivoting change in the political system. This observation is still valid, yet even within the lower and lower-middle classes, there is a difference between varying subclasses, that all lie under the

[204] Interview with Khaled Abdelfattah, Cairo, July 27th, 2008.

umbrella of the lower and lower-middle classes, in terms of levels of political awareness and participation. "If we say that, in the majority of the popular quarters of Cairo, political participation, accounted for in this case by the willingness and ability to take part in the voting process, is primarily concentrated in the lower and lower-middle classes, then it is the comparatively more educated and relatively economically well off within these classes that are more likely to be politically aware".[205] In Misr Qadima, the results of the aforementioned study appear to support this claim.

Concerning the political affiliation of the people of Misr Al Qadima, and whether there is dominance, for instance, for the NDP affiliates over their MB counterparts, from observation and close scrutiny one can safely assume that there is sound and often competent presence for the NDP as well as the MB and other Islamist groups. The MB and the other Islamists enjoy a comparatively sound presence in the poorer areas. Essentially, the political Islamists, and in particular the MB, are more active and efficient in the areas where the mosques of *Al Jamm`eya Al Sharr`eya* operate. As shall be displayed Chapter IV, there is a close association between the two entities. Although, officially, *Al Jamm`eya Al Sharr`eya* is supposed to be an apolitical service-oriented NGO, in reality this is not the case. However, on the level of the official discourse, the NGO ensures that it does not publicize the moral and material support that it actually provides to the MB cadres.[206] Within Misr Al Qadima, the Dar Essalam district, known to be rather rural/ poor is characterized with more features of political Islam activism, as opposed, for instance, to Misr Qadima proper which is relatively more urbanized and better off economically. With the increasing deterioration of services provided by the

[205] Ibid.
[206] Ahmed Abdallah and Ahmed Siam(1996). *Al Mosharaka Al Sha'beya Fi Hay Ain Al Sira Bel Qahera*. Cairo: Al Jeel Center.

state and its party (NDP), there is a fertile ground for such sociopolitical forces to intervene and play the role that the state is normally expected to fulfill, as shall be displayed in chapters IV and V.

Concluding: The Polity of Lesser Notables

The findings mentioned above indicate that political participation and awareness of the official venues for political practice sanctioned by the state are arguably limited in Misr Al Qadima. With a state that is increasingly absent from the everyday affairs of the inhabitants and, moreover, often perceived with distrust and disappointment on the part of the populace of Misr Al Qadima, political participation on the terms of the state is a highly unlikely occurrence. Instead, understanding political participation in the wider scope of resisting or rejecting the status quo imposed by the state and working towards changing the everyday realities as portrayed in Chapter I, one might in fact find that the residents of Misr Al Qadima are politically engaged, as will be shown in the upcoming chapters. As displayed earlier and in the milieu of Chapter I, patron-client networks of support are, therefore, one other form of disseminating resources and the residents of Misr Al Qadima are quite aware of that and tend to seek the relevant intermediaries that are capable of delivering the necessary resources best. This scope of patron-client networks has been arguably reemphasized with the state withdrawal catapulted with *infitah* and then the neo-liberal policies of the 1990's ERSAP.

The logical intermediaries of this patron-client stratagem in Misr Al Qadima, along with a multitude of other popular quarters in Cairo, are the Lesser Notables. This intermediary role carries with it also a sort of sociopolitical agency that can not go unnoticed. If the state is not willing to or capable of reaching the populace directly, then

the intermediaries are the logical solution for such a linkage to be established, which makes them the fulfillers of highly important sociopolitical and economic roles. In this arena of political patronage, Political Islamists, particularly the MB, have had a considerably successful record of patron-client networking, and this will be dealt with extensively in the course of Chapter IV.

Overall, the aforementioned also shows that, in Misr Qadima, there is fertile ground for the flourishing of sociopolitical intermediaries. This is a key factor in order for the sort of political agency that is maintained by the lesser notabilities to be consolidated. The rise in the political role of the lesser notabilities in Cairo's popular quarters is noteworthy:

> Those lesser notables have existed in these [popular] areas for quite sometime…There are similarities of continuing linkage between them and the traditional figures of authority in the Egyptian *harra*, such as the *futuwwa* and *ibn al-balad*. As we see now, the state is gradually withdrawing and such figures are reappearing on the political scene to fill some political vacuum. In the aftermath of the withdrawal of the state from the arena of administering the affairs of the popular polity, it is rather logical that such figures would emerge to represent their communities politically, even if it's done informally and via customary practices.[207]

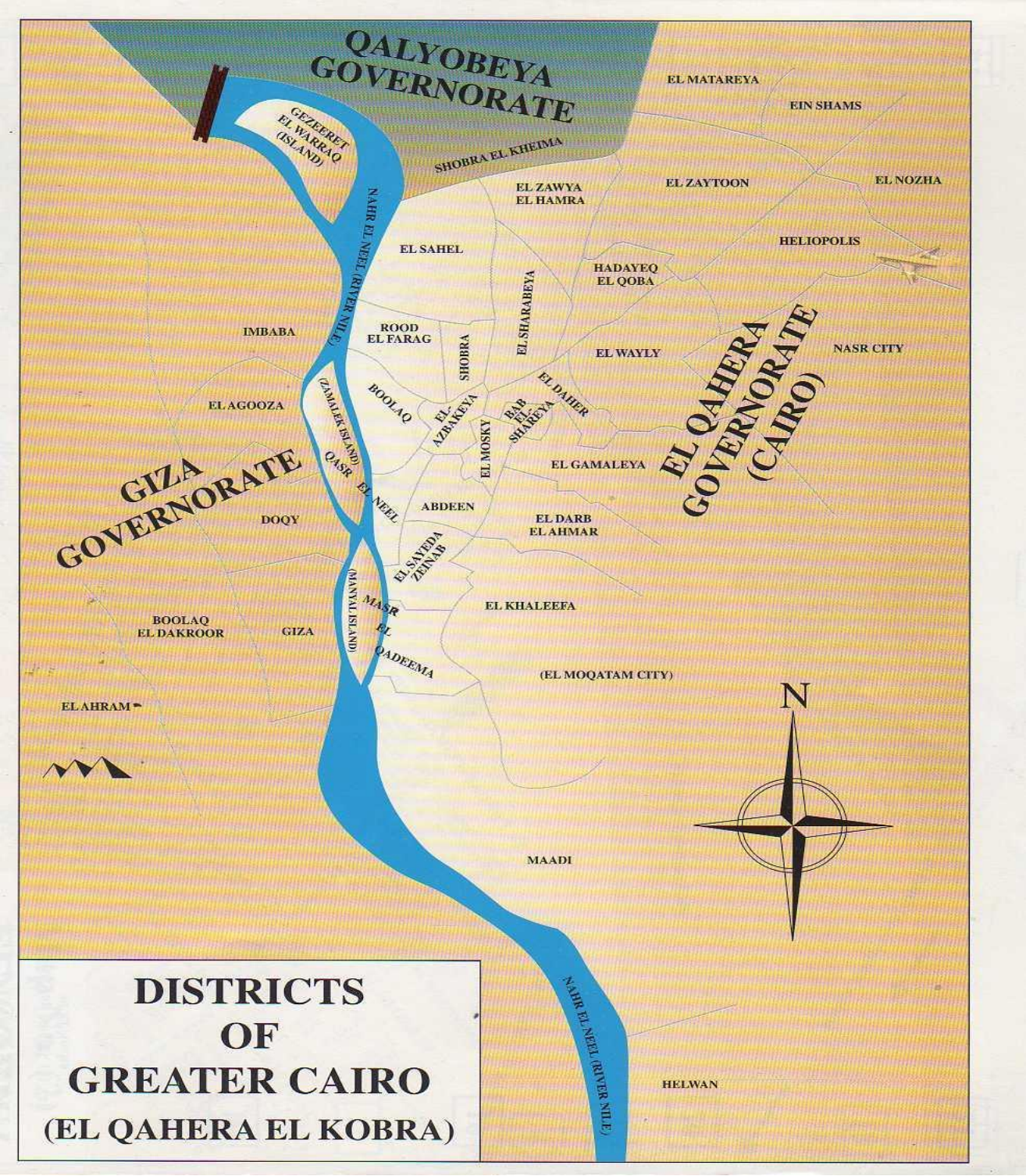
This chapter aimed at dissecting some of the socioeconomic and political features of the Misr Qadima polity. The socioeconomic indicators reflect that the role of the state as the main guarantor of services, employment and subsidies is increasingly shrinking. Additionally, the process of political participation in the formal, state-sanctioned, venues of political action shows that the overwhelming majority of the people of the area are not actually involved or perhaps even interested in such a process. These factors combined mean that the state is becoming increasingly absent from the

[207] Interview with Khaled Abdelfattah, Cairo, July 27th, 2008

daily affairs of the populace. As a result, it will be only logical for various non-state individual and organizational actors to claim the socioeconomic and political roles that the state has abandoned, as will be dissected in chapters IV and V.

The upcoming chapter tackles the role of the Islamic Social Institutions (ISIs) in fulfilling some of the functionalities that had been previously maintained by the state and the linkages these ISIs have with the Muslim Brotherhood in the popular quarter of Misr Al Qadima. By and large, the allegiances that are in the making between the lesser notabilities and political organizations, such as the MB, only show that the political agency of those lesser intermediaries is indeed a determining factor that plays an important role in drawing the political map of the popular polities of Cairo in the contemporary period.

Map 3.b: Districts of Greater Cairo[208]



[208] This is a detailed map of modern Cairo and its different neighborhoods and districts. The Misr Al Qadima district, which lies on the Southeastern banks of the Nile, also includes the Manial island. Source: Cairo City Key: Maps & Street Index of Greater Cairo. Elias Modern Press, Cairo, 2001.

Map 3.c: Misr Al Qadima today[209]

[209] Misr Al Qadima today in detail with its streets and various sub-neighborhoods illustrated. Source: Ibid.

Picture 3.a: Cairo, channel between Manial (Roda Island) and Old Cairo, Egypt

Picture 3.b: Streets of `Ain Al Sirra

Picture 3.c: Streets of `Ain Al Sirra

Chapter IV: The Muslim Brotherhood, The *Jamme`yya Al Shar`eyya* and Networks of Support in Misr Al Qadima: The Role of Lesser Notables

Overview of the Muslim Brotherhood in Cairo's popular polities

The Muslim Brotherhood (MB) has been a key player in the Egyptian polity with various degrees of influence and success ever since its foundation in the 1920's. Along its comparatively vast history, the MB maintained a fluctuating relationship with the different political regimes that governed the country throughout these eight decades or so. Out of this multiplicity of regimes, the Mubarak regime, particularly in the post 9/11 phase, seems to have adopted a relatively pragmatic approach in dealing with the MB; an approach that mainly depends on targeting the financial and administrative networks of the group and imprisoning the leading cadres that facilitate the operation of these networks.[210] Whether such a tactic was fruitful or not in offsetting the elevating prowess of the MB remains a debatable issue as it is probably too early to judge if the state has been actually successful in tracing and drying up the bulk of financial and administrative resources of the Brotherhood. Yet the interesting issue here is the fact that the state has acknowledged that the threat that is posed by the interlinked web of patron-client bonds incepted and efficiently maintained by the MB is quite grave to the extent that it required its enforced expulsion from within the Egyptian polity. This chapter aims at offering a portrayal of the mechanisms and structure of patronage politics of the MB in Egypt. In doing so it focuses on the manifestations of this patron-client stratagem on the level of state-society relations and the role that is played by the Lesser Notables in such a structure, with a special focus on the case of Misr Al Qadima.

[210] *Al Ahram*. January 15th, 2007. Vol. 131. Issue 43869

The Muslim Brotherhood: An overview

In 1929, Hassan Al Banna, an Islamic scholar who was working as a school teacher at the time, founded the Muslim Brotherhood in the town of Ismailia, on the banks of the Suez Canal. From its onset, the MB was in essence a grassroots movement that aimed at addressing the masses; the less endowed social classes that, by nature, represented the majority of the Egyptian population. Throughout the 1930s:

> The Society began to put into practice, an Islamic ideology that was unusual in several respects. It was, first of all, an ideology of disenfranchised classes. In a country where most political movements (including liberal and modernist ones) were products of the landed aristocracy and the urban elite, the Brotherhood became the voice of the educated middle and lower middle classes (and to a lesser extent of workers and peasants) and the means by which they demanded political participation. Throughout the decade, the Society placed increasing emphasis on social justice; closing the gap between the classes (and thus restoring the egalitarianism of the early Muslims) became one of its main objectives.[211]

In fact, Hassan Al Banna echoed an ongoing dissatisfaction of the upper class and the class system in its entirety. In his own words, "According to Islam everyone is equal... Thus, we see that Islam does not approve of the class system."[212]

The Muslim Brotherhood was a predominantly reformist grassroots movement, with the main objective of infiltrating the Egyptian society from within via establishing an expansive set of networks among the various echelons of the community. For Al Banna and the chief founders of the group, only when this infiltration expands and gets properly consolidated within the society, the establishment of the Islamic state could be

[211] "History of The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt". The Official Website of the Muslim Brotherhood. Available at: http://www.ikhwanweb.com/Home.asp?zPage=Systems&System=PressR&Press=Show&Lang= E&ID=4183. Web. 17 Oct. 2008

[212] Ibid.

fully actualized.[213] Historically, the structure of the MB reflected a somehow egalitarian system that was more in favor of the middle and the lower classes, as opposed to the mainly elitist political parties that were mostly dominant in the pre-1952 era. In essence, the structure of the MB that was set at the time had remained more or less the same until today. The chief governing body of the group, the 12-member Guidance Bureau, was, and still is, the de facto Executive Board of the MB with the General Guide at its apex. The *Shura* (consultation) council was also set, comprised of 90 members and mandated with the task of electing the 12 members of the Guidance Bureau and voting on the prime policies and decisions upheld by the Brotherhood. All over the country, the reservoir of the cadres that feed into the *Shura* Council and the Guidance Bureau came from the "local branches [which] were organized into districts [and] whose administration had a large measure of autonomy…The Society's structure remained decentralized, so that branches could continue to operate if the police arrested leading members"[214].

During the post World War II era, the Brotherhood grew massively. It continued to expand the scope and magnitude of its social welfare activities to the Egyptian community, "setting up hospitals, clinics and pharmacies, schools offering technical and academic courses for boys, girls and adults; and small factories to help remedy post-war unemployment."[215]

[213] Sameh Naguib (2005) *Al Ikhwan Al Moslemoun: Ro'eya Ishtirakeyya*. Cairo: Center for Socialist Studies.

[214] "History of The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt". The Official Website of the Muslim Brotherhood. Available at: http://www.ikhwanweb.com/Home.asp?zPage=Systems&System=PressR&Press=Show&Lang=E&ID=4183. Web. 17 Oct. 2008

[215] Ibid.

The Brotherhood post 1952

In the period following 1952, the relationship between the MB and the new regime was a fluctuating one. In the first few years there was a loose alliance in the making between the military regime and the MB as it was quite obvious that the regime needed some foundational basis of grassroots popularity to consolidate its rule. And of course the MB was the best candidate for the role, especially in the aftermath of the demise of the popularity and appeal that the liberal and the modernist parties used to have on the street level. This demise followed the failure of the secular/liberal project, led by Al Wafd Party, in the face of colonial hegemony, namely the British occupation and the newly established Zionist state in 1948.[216]

However the honeymoon between the regime and the MB did not last for more than a few years, after which Nasser had realized that the MB poses an existential threat to his rule which had to be eradicated. In 1955 the Nasser regime initiated a brutal wave of attacks on the MB that targeted, not only the main cadres of the movement by massive arrests, trials, and executions, but also the foundational infrastructure of the MB via the nationalization of the bulk of Islamic Social Institutions (ISIs) that the group had developed over nearly three decades of intensive mobilization. In fact, the Nasser regime adopted an array of policies that aimed at tightening the grip of the state over the activities of ISIs, and which ranged from issuing specific laws that put the funding of these Islamic institutions under firm state monitoring and supervision to banning entire organizations from upholding their activities, as was the case of *Al Jamm`eyya Al*

[216] Abdelrahim Aly (2004) *Al Ikhwan Al Moslemoun: Azmat Tayyar Al Tajdid*. Cairo: Al Mahroussa Center. p.50-55.

Shar`eyya (JS) in 1966[217]. For instance, in 1964, the state issued the NGO law # 32 which mandated all civil society organizations to obtain the approval of the state regarding their sources of funding, and prior to carrying out any fundraising activities. The law was interpreted as an attempt to stifle the ISIs in particular, given the growing concern that the regime had developed pertaining to their growing budgets at that juncture. Ultimately, the policy was indeed effective and a lot of bureaucratic obstacles were put in the face of most ISIs; halting down the ability of an organization such as *Al Jamm`eyya Al Shar`eyya* to maintain the same level of services it used to provide prior to the issuance of the law. With *Al Jamm`eyya Al Shar`eyya* in particular, the Nasser regime went as far as dissolving the board of the entire organization and banning it from pursuing its activities for a few months in 1966, before allowing it back with a newly appointed chairman, General Abdelrahim Amin, a regime appointee and, in effect, a watchdog for the Nasser regime over the activities of the organization.[218]

Moreover, with the introduction of the agricultural reform policies and the expansion in the welfare state system of the Nasser regime, the state had met considerable successes in co-opting a plethora of social segments within the middle and the lower middle classes, eventually offsetting the gap that was previously filled by the MB activities.[219] Nonetheless, the relative success of the state in counteracting the MB was proven to be temporary, for with the advent of the Sadat regime and the open door

[217] Nagwan Shiha (2003) The Accountability of NGOs Applied to Egypt: The Case of *Al Jamm`eya Al Shar`eyya* & Al Sa`id Cooperative for Education & Development (in Arabic). Cairo: Faculty of Economics & Political Science, Cairo University; the JS was established in 1912 with the primary objective of spreading Islamic awareness and *da`wa*. In 1967, JS was officially recognized as a civil society organization in accordance with the law issued in the same year to organize the affairs of civil society organizations.

[218] Ibid and Interviews with JS members, Cairo, July and August, 2008

[219] Sameh Naguib (2005) *Al Ikhwan Al Moslemoun: Ro'eya Ishtirakeyya*. Cairo: Center for Socialist Studies. p.67.

policies of 1974, the MB came to the forefront of the Egyptian polity yet again as the prime sociopolitical movement.

Sadat and the revival of the MB

Indeed there was a multitude of factors that nurtured the resurgence of the MB as a viable sociopolitical force in 1970's. First off, there was the failure of the Arab Socialist project of Nasser, which was catapulted with the 1967 defeat. Also, on pragmatic and politico-economic terms, the Egyptian state had only met minimal success in attaining its developmental goals with the demise of Nasser.[220] Apparently, in the aftermath of the massive bloat that the state has gone through during the Nasser years, the cooptation and the social contract of the welfare state with the middle/lower middle classes was not in place anymore. With that came the advent of Sadat's *infitah* (open door) policies in 1974 and his accompanying determination to empower the Islamist sociopolitical forces within the Egyptian polity in order to offset the threat that the leftist student movement and the socialist Nasserites posed to his rule. The result was a wide resurgence in the scope and magnitude of the MB activities, this time under the sponsorship of the Sadat regime.[221]

[220] Ibid. As asserted by Naguib, in 1970, the year that witnessed Sadat's ascent into power, Egypt's five year plans that targeted the reduction of the net value of imports and the improvement of the balance of payment, failed in achieving these goals. In fact, in 1966, and even before the 1967 defeat, the value of net imports almost doubled from 215 million L.E., in 1961, to 431 million L.E, in 1966. As a share of GDP, the value of net imports has also increased from 15 to 20% of GDP within the same time period. Moreover, the deficit in the balance of payments also increased from 113 million to 166 million L.E between 1961 and 1966.

[221] Abdelrahim Aly (2004) *Al Ikhwan Al Moslemoun: Azmat Tayyar Al Tajdid*. Cairo: Al Mahroussa Center. p.60. As stated in Chapter I of this study, Sadat's empowerment of the Islamists (The MB and other militant groups) eventually brought about his own demise on the hands of Jihadist militants in 1981. By the time Mubarak took over, it was virtually impossible to counterbalance the huge spectrum of activities sponsored by the MB and other Islamists and the regime was more or less forced to play stick-and-carrot negotiations and truces with the MB instead of confronting it. The regime's severe confrontation with 'Militant' Islam, represented by the groups that condone violence against the regime such as al-Jihad and al-Jamma`a al-Islamiya, as opposed to 'moderate' Islamism of the MB, nonetheless, has been more or less ongoing since the demise of Sadat. However in 2005 the leaderships of 'militant' Islam renounced violence against the regime, breaking a deal with the regime that secured the release of a large chunk of their cadres from the penitentiaries of the state.

The resurgence of the MB's networks of resources: The patron-client stratagem

There were primarily three chief sectors that formulated the backbone of the MB's resurgence in 1970s; the communal mosques (which lie outside the jurisdiction of the state),[222] the ISIs which operated on the services, cultural, educational and health realms, and the capitalist Islamist institutions (corporations, print shops…etc). By the mid-1990s, tens of thousands of mosques were operating under the direct sponsorship of the MB and other Islamist groups. The wide scope of these mosques and their geographical distribution over mostly all of Egypt enabled the MB to vitalize its welfare system and widen its social base extensively. Additionally, by the year 2000, there was over 5000 ISIs operating under the umbrella of the MB. A few of these social institutions provided the basic seemingly apolitical services of teaching Koran and organizing Hajj trips, yet the majority of them focused their activities within the services sectors, establishing clinics, educational facilities and vocational training centers, with particular emphasis on concentrating these activities in Cairo's popular quarters.[223] Often, "the criteria for enjoying the opportunities and benefits in Islamic social welfare institutions is adherence to Islam (including the codes of social and family morality) also [operating within] networks of patronage and clientship, communal membership and loyalty, and

[222] As opposed to the mosques that lie under the jurisdiction of the state -represented by the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs and the state-affiliated religious institution, Al Azhar, - those communal mosque are autonomous in terms of their sources of funding and also have their own *Imams* (priests), who are not supervised or monitored by Al Azhar or the aforementioned ministry. In its efforts to suppress the increasing influence of the Islamists, the police-apparatus has been targeting a plethora of these communal mosques, shutting them down and arresting some of their *Imams*. However, due to their relatively small size and sometimes low-profile, such mosques are often very hard to quantify and, subsequently, target which, to date, makes them quite infiltrative especially in the low-income communities of Cairo and elsewhere in the rural areas.

[223] Sameh Naguib (2005) *Al Ikhwan Al Moslemoun: Ro'eya Ishtirakeyya*. Cairo: Center for Socialist Studies. p.70

possibly political allegiance."[224] Some of these ISIs, such as the *Jamme`yya Al Shar`eyya*, which will be dealt with in further detail later in this chapter, functioned on a nationwide scale with an overall membership that surpassed 2 million members in 2005.[225]

The sustainability of the funding and the overarching web of patron-client networks maintained by the MB play an important role in consolidating the prowess of the MB, especially in the poorer/popular quarters of Cairo. This was ensured via the utilization of the *zakat* funds that were channeled through mosques and the extensive endowments coming from Islamic banks and corporations, which are mainly owned by businessmen that are MB affiliates and sympathizers. This cycle of funding is further enhanced via the reinvestment of the profits of these Islamic ventures in low-cost services in the arena of education and health and other fundraising activities in the realm of religious books and audio/visual produces.[226] Logically speaking, "the social dimension of these acts of charity allows for the development of bonds and ties between givers and recipients, in some cases taking the form of relations of patronage and clientelism".[227]

A vivid example of one of the most prominent Islamist ventures utilized by the MB here is the small/medium sized Islamist publishing houses, which played an immense

[224] Janine Clark (2004) "Social Movement Theory & Patron-Clientelism: Islamic Social Institutions and The Middle Class in Jordan, Egypt and Yemen". *Comparative Political Studies*. Vol. 37. No. 8. p.946

[225] Ihab A. Negm (1996) The Political Role of Islamic NGOs in Egypt: A Case Study of *Al Jamm`eyya Al Shar`eyya* (in Arabic). Cairo: Faculty of Economics & Political Science, Cairo University.

[226] Most of these "Islamic" businesses are similar to their secular counterparts, only with an "Islamic" characterization to them represented by an Islamic dress code for the employees and/or an ethical/religious social and moral code. The owners and chief stakeholders in these Islamic ventures have been predominantly MB affiliates and sympathizers. A sizable portion of the profits coming from these businesses constitutes a chief source of income for various ISIs and the MB itself, and the channeling of such resources to these entities sometimes takes the form of sponsoring charitable activities, mostly also associated with the scope of services provided by ISIs. The notion of the financial allocations orchestrated by the MB will be elaborated upon with further detail in the upcoming section.

[227] Salwa Ismail (2006) *Political Life in Cairo's New Quarters*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. p.81

role in the revival of the Islamic rhetoric. Those houses also operated a recruitment facility that guaranteed a continuous breed of cadres that benefited from, and helped publicize for the ideological spectrum of the MB.[228] Overall, the Islamist scope of patron-client networks was predominantly decentralized and entrenched within the societal structure of the community which made it virtually impractical for it to be uprooted or even contained by the regime.

The 1974 infitah: The socioeconomic context of the MB resurgence

The *infitah* (Open Door) policy was an economic liberalization program that began with optimism in the early 1970s. Bromley and Bush state:

> Sadat's strategy was to harness Arab capital, western technology and Egyptian resources by removing Nasser's statist shackles which were seen to have restricted growth and initiative. Yet during this initiative, fees from the Suez Canal, oil sales and remittances accounted for more than three-quarters of current account receipts and more than 40 cent of GDP by the mid-1980s, compared with just 6 per cent in 1974. Per capita income doubled during the oil boom years between 1974-1985 from US$334 in 1974 to US$700 in 1984. The economy was therefore acutely vulnerable to external shocks, and in order to sustain high growth rates after the mid-1980s, Egypt accumulated massive balance of payments deficits and a huge foreign debt. The balance of payments deficit reached US$5.3bn in 1986, equal to 15 per cent of GDP, and the budget deficit reached US$8.8bn, some 23 per cent of GDP.[229]

As a result, by the end of the 1970s, the Egyptian state was at a dire economic juncture that was reflected in its inability to pay off the services of an accumulating foreign debt. Tables 4.a and 5.a show aspects of the financial crisis that the state was heading at in the early 1980s.[230]

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[228] Interviews with locals in Shobra & Misr Al Qadima, Cairo, June 2009
[229] Simon Bromley and Ray Bush (1994) Adjustment in Egypt? : *The Political Economy of Reform. Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 21, No. 60, June, pp. 201-213
[230] Marie-Christine Aulas (1982) Sadat's Egypt: A Balance Sheet. *MERIP Reports* No. 107, Egypt in the New Middle East, July – August.

Table 4.a: Egypt's external debt ($ millions)[231]

Year	1971	1973	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980
Total Outstanding	2,319.4	2,912.9	7,254	8,780.9	12,607	14,311.6	16,037.2	17,385.7

Table 4.b: Balance of Trade, 1974-79 ($ millions)[232]

Year / Merchandise	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979
Export	1671	1566	1609	1992	1984	2512
Import	3467	4321	4288	4513	5283	6675
Net	(1796)	(2755)	(2679)	(2521)	(3299)	(4163)

Aggregately, as cited earlier in various sections of this study, this socioeconomic context of the state post 1974, characterized with an incremental erosion in its ability to allocate resources and provide services to the society, posed a very favorable environment for the establishment and further growth and consolidation of the MB cooptation strategies, especially among the lower middle/lower socioeconomic classes. Empirical evidence displays that, for instance, whereas the labor force has witnessed an aggregate increase of 2.2 percent between 1976 and 1986, the increase in the number of university graduates was circa 7.5 percent in the same period. Yet those fresh graduates could not be contained within the public and governmental sector anymore, as was the case during the Nasser phase. The logical outcome was a massive surge in the rate of unemployment from 2.1 percent in 1969 to 7.7 percent in 1976, and ultimately 12.2

[231] Source: Ibid
[232] Ibid

percent and 14.4 percent in 1985 and 1996 respectively. In 1996, university graduates constituted more than 25 percent of the total unemployed population. Of course this virtual army of unemployed university graduates constituted a potential reservoir for the cooptation of the MB. The following table shows the exponential increase in the numbers of university graduates between 1964 and 1984.[233]

Table 4.c: Increase in University Graduates[234]

Year	Total Number of University Graduates Nationwide	Percentage of Growth
1964/65	16,268	100% (base year)
1974/5	41,916	257.6%
1984/5	115,744	711%

The rise of the Lesser Notable cadres in the popular polities of Cairo

In the milieu of the low-income communities, *infitah* policies also facilitated the ascent of a socioeconomic class described by Alan Richards as "nouveaux riche comprador elements"; a class that "has both benefited from the (partial) economic liberalization and encouraged the regime to continue to liberalize."[235] As mentioned earlier in the course of this writing, the ascent of this class in the Egyptian society was virtually associated with the adoption of *infitah* due to the sort of economic opportunities that *infitah* made available, primarily the speculative/commercial activities that such nouveaux riche elements thrived upon. This nouveaux riche typology indeed constitutes the reservoir from which the lesser sociopolitical notabilities rise to prominence in the popular communities. In actuality, scrutinizing the tactics of the MB in Cairo's popular quarters, where the ground is quite fertile for the sort of cooptation nurtured by the

[233] Sameh Naguib (2005) *Al Ikhwan Al Moslemoun: Ro'eya Ishtirakeyya*. Cairo: Center for Socialist Studies. p.91
[234] Source: Ibid, p.88
[235] Alan Richards (1984) Ten Years of *infitah*. *Journal of Development Studies*, Issue 4, Vol. 28.

Brotherhood to take place; sheds some light on the success of the movement in consolidating its power base within the Cairene polity, primarily via co-opting relatively large segments of this abovementioned socioeconomic class.

As reviewed prior in the case of Misr Al Qadima, in a variety of Cairo's popular quarters the social fabric is somehow heterogeneous, with sizable segments of petty bourgeoisie, professional lower/lower middle classes as well as rural-urban migrants. Most of these segments share the suffering from burdensome economic conditions, where unemployment prevails and adequate health and educational services are considered a rare commodity. In such a context, the conditions for the proliferation of the *da`wa* (connoting the publicity of the value system of the MB and the parallel recruitment of cadres that are capable of disseminating the networks pertaining) and the consolidation of the social welfare system (establishing an alternative scheme of social institutions vis-à-vis the modern/secular state) become quite favorable indeed. As asserted by Clark:

> The Islamist project, therefore, is an attempt to create a seemingly seamless web of religion, politics, charity, and all forms of activism. All of these realms should reinforce one another and promote public virtue and personal piety. In this invention of tradition, the concept of *da`wa* becomes central. Beyond simply proselytizing or preaching (as traditionally defined), *da`wa* becomes the very act of "activating" Islam through deed in all spheres of life... ISIs form just one part of a larger network of Islamist institutions; the intention of which is to activate or apply Islam to all spheres of life. Working or volunteering for or donating to an ISI as a form of activist *da`wa* is an important component of Islamist identity.[236]

Henceforth, the role of the *do`at* (the cadres responsible for undertaking the proliferation of *da`wa*) is quite central as it fulfils the essential function of creating viable networks of members and sympathizers.

[236] Janine Clark (2004) "Social Movement Theory & Patron-Clientelism: Islamic Social Institutions and The Middle Class in Jordan, Egypt and Yemen". *Comparative Political Studies*. Vol.37. No.8. p.948

In order for such cadres to actualize their role proper, they often have to have certain qualities that enable them to disseminate the *da`wa* among the communities within which they duel. In fact, the profile of a sizable portion of these cadres fits the typology of the Lesser Notable that was introduced earlier in the course of chapters I and II. Their educational background is largely irrelevant, as long as they are well versed in the foundations of Koran and Hadith, which enables them to portray an image of piety and moral goodness that typically endow them the title of Hajj. Additionally, their possession of material resources and networks within the community, primarily depending on the infiltration of familial ties and the kind of commercial activities they are involved in, is also quite pivotal as it facilitates the consolidation of the socioeconomic stature maintained by these Lesser Notables within various echelons of the popular polity.[237]

The machinations via which the *da`wa* operates also tell a great deal about the extent of its entrenchment within the Egyptian polity, especially in the popular quarters. By and large, there are three main interrelated categories of *da`wa*. First, there is the individual scheme of action. The *do`at* are regularly present in the mosques before and after the prayers, usually leading the prayers by virtue of being well versed in Koran and Hadith, as well as the centers that offer social welfare and services, which grants such cadres a natural opportunity to communicate with a variety of segments from the population on a personal level. After the cadres identify the potential recruits, they work on winning them over by empowering them and advising them to start playing a role in the observation of the Islamic codes of morality on the level of the nuclear family and in the workplace and then on the level of the neighborhood as a whole. The complete

[237] Interviews with JS members and Misr Qadima residents, Cairo, June-July 2008

crystallization of the new cadre takes place when he/she is ascribed to the conceptualizations of the MB concerning the linkage between religion and politics and the essentiality of political action to attain the objectives of the Brotherhood. The second main category of *da`wa* is the public domain which involves a larger level of participation and the utilization of public venues, such as mosques and awareness centers, to call for and popularize the values, principles and objectives of the Islamist project.[238] Then, there is also the published domain of printed material, which makes good use of the plethora of publishing houses and print shops associated with the MB, playing a crucial role also in spreading the values and ideas of the Islamist project in a simplified manner and predominantly through small booklets that are easy to print and read.[239]

Thus the Islamist project of the MB is, in essence, an attempt to reshape the boundaries of state-society relations:

> An essential aspect of Islamist identity therefore is the creation of alternative institutions to those of the state. ISIs are not only alternative institutions to state institutions but represent the foundations of an alternative society. They stand in direct contrast to secular states that appear to have lost their concern for the poor. By offering successful social welfare services in the name of Islam to their fellow citizens that their respective states seem unwilling or unable to do, ISIs represent an ideological and practical alternative to the present system. As institutions, ISIs are more than just representative of a populist ideology; they are that ideology put into practice and central to the Islamist vision of a new society and Islamist identity.[240]

Indeed the Islamist project of the MB has been quite successful in cultivating an amalgam of networks that has, in many cases, filled the vacuum left by the secular state. Later in

[238] Ibid; this aspect entails a paramount importance in reaching out to the polity, noting the huge number of mosques that lie within the jurisdiction of the MB, and which surpasses 100,000 mosques all over Egypt as mentioned earlier.
[239] Sameh Naguib (2005) *Al Ikhwan Al Moslemoun: Roe'ya Ishtirakeyya*. Cairo: Center for Socialist Studies. p.92-3 and interviews with MB cadres, Cairo, June 2009
[240] Janine Clark (2004) "Social Movement Theory & Patron-Clientelism: Islamic Social Institutions and The Middle Class in Jordan, Egypt and Yemen". *Comparative Political Studies*. Vol.37. No.8. p.949

this chapter, more light shall be shed on the role of ISIs and the linkages they maintain with the Brotherhood via the case study of *Al Jamm`eyya Al Shar`eyya*.

Socioeconomic background of MB cadres: the professional middle class and the syndicates

As cited earlier, since its outset, the MB has been sought as a social movement aiming at attaining change within the society in a bottom-up approach, infiltrating the popular echelons of the Egyptian community and mobilizing the masses on the grassroots level, along the process. However when looking at the operative cadres of the MB, one finds that, almost predominantly, the key-players in the MB have always been, one way or another, associated with the professional/technocratic middle class. The founding father himself, Al Banna, was a school teacher and most of the members of the Guidance Bureau in the pre-1952 era also came from various technocratic backgrounds. In the Nasser phase, most of the active cadres of the MB came from similar professional middle class backgrounds, being engineers, physicians, teachers…etc.

Today, the strong societal and political footholds of the MB rest within the professional middle class. The paramount dominance and mobilization that the MB has on this level can be portrayed, for instance, on the level of the professional syndicates and associations. The boards of the doctors' syndicate, the engineers' syndicate, and the lawyers' syndicate, among other professional syndicates, have all been run and administered by MB cadre that won their seats in considerably free elections, since 1992. This does not necessarily reflect that the majority of Egypt's professional middle class are MB adherents and supporters but rather that the MB has been quite savvy and

successful in mobilizing support among these circles, organizing their activities and pivoting their candidates in the electoral circles of the syndicates quite prudently.[241]

Also from the state's viewpoint, the realm of the syndicates could be relatively less confrontational and challenging to the political regime than, say; the realm of parliamentary elections. Therefore allowing the MB to operate in the syndicates seemed like an affordable appeasing cost that could be used at times as a bargaining tool with the MB, in return for the Society reducing its outright political mobilization in the public domain[242] and, subsequently, the predominance of the MB in the context of the professional syndicates peaked in the early 1990s. In 1992, out of the 61 Board Members were elected to the Engineers' Syndicate; 45 members belonged to the MB. The following table shows the gradual progression of the MB candidates in the Doctors' Syndicates elections in the period between 1985 and 1992:

Table 4.d: The MB's electoral votes in the Doctors' Syndicate (1985-1992)[243]

Year	Total number of members registered in Doctors' Syndicate	Total number of members that voted in elections	Total number of members that voted for the MB candidates
1985	60,000	12,600	5000 (40% of total votes)
1992	90,000	21,000	15,000 (71% of total votes)

Overall, and despite the increasing limitations and restrictions exercised by the regime against the cadres of the MB in the ranks of the professional syndicates, such cadres still

[241] Interviews with Doctors' Syndicate members, Cairo, July 2009
[242] Ibid
[243] Sameh Naguib (2005) *Al Ikhwan Al Moslemoun: Ro'eya Ishtirakeyya*. Cairo: Center for Socialist Studies. p.96

constitute the most viable and well-organized blocs in mostly all of the professional syndicates.

As a result of the incremental domination of the MB and affiliated Islamist cadres over the professional syndicates, the state eventually placed the country's two biggest professional syndicates, the Doctors' and the Engineers' syndicates, under judicial guardianship with the pretext of the two syndicates advocating the political cause of a banned political organization; the MB. Subsequently, the resilient MB presence again reemerged within the branch syndicates, those subsidiary syndicates that operate on the level of governorates, and which are sill considered as strong footholds for the MB to date.[244]

In addition to focusing its efforts on dominating the professional associations as shown in the case of the syndicates, the MB has also been adamant on infiltrating the popular polities of Cairo and elsewhere in Egypt, which is a basic constituent in the mission and vision of the group as stated earlier. In doing so, the intermediary agents, represented by various categories of Lesser Notables and other sociopolitical forces, have played an instrumental role. Whereas the educated and the professionals have predominantly constituted the reservoir of policy and decision-making circles of the MB, the grassroots basis have also been crucial in spreading the *da`wa* and services of the MB on the popular level. This dichotomy is displayed, for example, when one compares between some of the MB's most influential operative cadres, such as the 88 MB MPs

[244] Interviews with Human Rights Specialist Jano Charbel, Cairo, July 2009. According to Charbel, "In 1993, and in response to the successes of the opposition parties along with those of the Brotherhood and other Islamists within the professional syndicates, the state issued the Unified Syndicates Law; Law 100/93: Guaranteeing Democracy in Professional Syndicates. It was enforced upon all professional syndicates in order to place them under close state scrutiny and control…The provisions of Law 100/93 set considerably high electoral quorums, specifically 50% + 1 of the eligible voters from each syndicate's general assembly. Election results are invalidated if this quorum is not met".

elected in 2005, on the one hand, and other notable cadres such as Al Swerky, Hassan Malek, and Khairat Al Shater[245] all of whom are merchants and businessmen or, put differently, belong to the category of those that are referred to in the context of this writing as 'Lesser Notables', on the other.

Whereas the first group mostly belongs to the professional middle class, the second shares the characteristics of the popular Lesser Notables with a humble educational background, a strong network of familial/clan ties within their popular polities, and, quite often, sound commercial activities and wealth that enables them to dispense various resources and services among respective incumbents. Sometimes also the boundaries between these two categories become somehow blurry and indeed a few prominent cadres in the ranks of the MB posses some features of this lesser notability persona, despite their professional middle class background.

The MB MPs

In addition to possessing this diverse technocratic background, the majority of the MPs of the MB could also be considered as active and influential cadres on the popular level in their constituencies. In fact, If we look at the organizational affiliation that the current 88 MB parliamentarians have with the MB, one finds that they come from two main sectors, first, the *da`wa* (religious awareness) and, second, the social services sector. These two prime affiliations are deeply tied with the communities these figures operate within. The first scheme, *da`wa*, is comprised of social religious leaderships that spread religious awareness to the populace in the alleys of the popular neighborhoods and villages. By doing so, they are closely tied with these communities and in fact represent a

[245] Al Swerky's case is elaborated upon further down. Khairat Al Shater is a businessman and the Deputy Guide of the MB, and Hassan Malek is also a businessman that owns and operates one of the chief furniture stores in Cairo and is considered as one of the main financiers of the MB.

kind of popular leadership. They lead the people in prayers, present the Friday sermons, and provide the needy with monthly allowances from the local mosques…etc.[246] The second sector of social servicers are those that are affiliated with the *ber* (charity) committee in the MB, and those are operative cadres that work with and facilitate an amalgamation of social organizations and networks that provide an array of services, in pretty much all walks of life, to those in need.[247]

In the parliament, the diverse professional background of the MPs gives the MB a profound edge as a political bloc. "The Brotherhood has historically drawn many of its members from the professions. [This] gives the bloc in-house specialists to rely upon when Parliament takes up technical issues. Brotherhood MPs include, among others, doctors, dentists, engineers, lawyers, scientists, academics and legal experts." According to one MB parliamentarian, "As 88, we have specialists from all fields and we are better able to support one another and facilitate cooperation."[248] Yet, having such a professional middle class background, this group of MB parliamentarians still possesses attributes of popular leadership and sound connectedness with their grassroots basis as well. Those MPs come from two prime backgrounds; either *da`wa* or the social services sector and in both cases they do live and work in their constituencies, which only reinforces their role

[246] See page 132 for an overview of the role of the communal mosques that operate outside the jurisdiction of Al Azhar and the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs. For the most part, the MB-affiliated *do`at* stand in opposition to the Imams and religious cadres associated with Al Azhar, who are being increasingly portrayed by the MB and the other Islamist forces as the mouthpieces of the regime and the government, rather than being independent religious scholars.

[247] Interviews with Hossam Tammam, Cairo, August 2008. Tammam is a journalist and a researcher who is also the editor of Islam Online, a pioneering internet portal that presents and discusses the news and discourses of a plethora of Islamist movements around the globe. Tammam also stressed that the office where we held our conversation also hosted a research center that is dedicated mainly to studying the social and political implications of the phenomenon of political Islam.

[248] Samer Shehata and Joshua Stacher (2006) "The Brotherhood Goes to Parliament". *Middle East Report*, Issue 240, Fall. Available Online: http://www.merip.org/mer/mer240/shehata_stacher.html. Web. 17 Nov. 2008

as popular leaders and communal pro-activists. The following table displays the occupational backgrounds of the (2005-2010) MB parliamentarians:

Table 4.e: Professional occupations of the 88 MB MPs of the 2005 Parliament [249]

Profession	Number of MPs	Percentage out of the MB bloc
Workers	9	10%
Preachers and Imams	8	9%
Doctors and Pharmacists	8	9%
Agricultural Engineers	2	2%
Lawyers	6	7%
Engineers	12	14%
Accountants	6	7%
Businessmen	2	2%
Teachers	7	8%
University Professors	11	13%
State Employees	17	19%
Total	88	100%

Socioeconomic class stratification and ideologies within MB: Pragmatists vs. conservatives

Hence the socioeconomic background of MB members sets to a great extent the kind of role that they are ascribed to play in the ranks of the organization. Yet, other factors also, such as the generation and the rural/urban divide, help in defining the sort of

[249] Source: *Political Participation in the 2005 Parliamentary Elections* (2006) The Egyptian Association for Community Participation Enhancement, Cairo. p.285

mandate and sometimes even the line of thought upon which the MB members are classified. By and large, two main political orientations do exist within the MB:

> The pragmatists are more willing to negotiate with the Egyptian state, so as to be ready to take advantage of cracks in the authoritarian order. It is this group of activists who engineered the takeover of most of the professional syndicates and served in parliamentary coalitions with the Wafd and Labor Parties during the 1980s…They are ideologically flexible and open to compromise [and] frame their positions on the basis of political and civil rights; notions of rule of law, rather than moral or religious rectitude, drive their thinking and strategy. The other leading trend—more ideologically rigid—also has membership in the various departments, and on the Shura Council and Guidance Office. They tend to view politics as a byproduct of the outreach mission, which one performs by being a consummate Muslim to convert citizens to an Islamic lifestyle.[250]

Most observers would second the reckoning that the latter group- the conservatives- is in fact the driving force behind the bulk of tactics and policies adopted by the MB and that it has been further empowered especially with the recent regime attacks. The factors that help shape the political orientation of the MB members are primarily the geographical (rural/urban) origin as well as the generation (age-group) of the cadre.

Generally, the older generations of the MB seem to be more conservative than the younger ones. Nonetheless, even within the younger generations, those that originate from the countryside seem to be aligning more to the conservative line in their sociopolitical views and policies. Essam El `Erian, the prominent MB cadre and head of the Political Bureau of the group, notes, "Most newcomers to the Guidance Office in the past decade have come from the provinces rather than cities. They have brought with them the stereotypical villager's "traditional" values: suspicion of the new, unquestioning loyalty to leadership and lack of critical thinking skills…The countryside is affecting the

[250] Joshua Stacher (2009) "The Brothers and the Wars". Middle East Report. Issue 250. Spring. Available Online: http://www.merip.org/mer/mer250/stacher.html. Web. 11 Apr. 2009

Muslim Brotherhood more than the Muslim Brotherhood is affecting it."[251] Of course another factor that adds up to the increasing prowess of the rural as opposed to the urban MB cadres is the fact that the regime has been paying much more attention to the urban centers of Cairo and Giza in terms of policing campaigns and repressive tactics than it has concerning the rural or less endowed areas, which gave the MB cadres in these relatively remote areas the opportunity to organize more freely as well as operate under less pressure.

Thus, with this ongoing struggle for the soul of the MB, it seems that the conservatives are advancing further than the reformists in the milieu of the MB prime policy-making bodies; the 12-member Guidance Bureau and the 90-member Shura Council. The rural-urban divide appears to be a decisive factor in this process, where the influence of the countryside-originated, mostly conservative, cadres is on the rise in the face of the mainly urbanized and seemingly more liberal and pragmatic MB cadres.

The financial arm of the MB's Lesser Notables

The consolidation of patron-client networks of services and resources has been a prime factor in the success of the MB as a political organization, particularly on the popular level. These networks are indeed quite infiltrative within several businesses and commercial activities as well as a plethora of ISIs, which makes the task of the state quite complicated, as it targets and attempts to cut through such networks. According to the patron-client model presented in Chapter I, political patronage is mainly carried out via a pyramidal relationship that rests on the dissemination of resources from the top cadres to subordinate incumbents until reaching the grass-roots level of the community. As shall be

[251] Ibid.

displayed in this chapter, in the case of the MB, such patronage networks are predominantly orchestrated via individual cadres that also utilize the ISIs which are operational on the popular level in order to extend this distributional process to the popular communities. By and large, the regime has found it plausible to try to halt the activities of the individual cadres themselves rather than the ISIs within which they operate.

In the early days of 2007, the Egyptian state launched a sizable campaign against the "financial arm" of the Muslim Brotherhood all over Egypt, arresting hundreds of MB cadres that were allegedly linked to a variety of commercial ventures that funded the wide scope of activities of the Muslim Brotherhood.[252] The scheme of the state's clampdown on the MB was mostly an attempt to secure the consolidation of NDP's power in the face of the Brotherhood. The list of the arrested cadres included chief MB figures such as Khairat Al Shatir and Hassan Malek:

> They were eventually charged with money laundering, financing banned political activity and trying to revive the Brotherhood's paramilitary wing. A month after the arrests, on January 28, Egypt's prosecutor-general froze al-Shatir's assets, along with those of 29 others. Businesses owned by Brothers, including several publishing houses and import/export firms, a pharmaceuticals manufacturer and a construction company were closed, the merchandise confiscated. The frozen assets have been valued at tens of millions of dollars...Seizing the assets of major financiers such as Khairat al-Shatir might discourage others from funding the organization. The measures could also have been intended to drain the Brotherhood's campaign coffers before the June [municipal] elections.[253]

By then, it was quite obvious for the ruling regime that the Islamist forces operating on various levels within the Egyptian polity have succeeded in posing themselves within the

[252] *Al Ahram*. January 15th, 2007. Vol. 131. Issue 43869

[253] Samer Shehata and Joshua Stacher (2007) "Boxing In The Brothers." Middle East Repot. August. Available Online: http://www.merip.org/mero/mero080807.html. Web. 17 Oct. 2008

already existing structure of the state system, building interconnected alliances and networks with state authorities and personnel along the way.

The case of El Swerky, the famous merchant and owner of Al Tawhid Wal Noor[254], and also a prominent MB affiliate, was yet another episode in the clampdown over the MB's lesser notables in the course of what the state media came to describe as the "financial arm" of the MB. Al Swerky in fact belongs to the category of those that the MB can depend upon for endowing resources and services onto its adherents and supporters. However the state exercised some sort of a malevolent patronage upon him: letting him fall out of grace. When it was felt that he was increasingly threatening the popularity of other competing NDP figures with his growing influence in the popular district of Shobra, and amassing a sizable amount of wealth that supports the activities of the MB along the process, a law suit was virtually fabricated for him by the state and he was imprisoned.[255] Perhaps this is a signifying difference between the two typologies of social bases enjoyed by the NDP and the MB, whereas the similar NDP affiliated figures possess a great deal of state patronage and protection, the MB suffers from the lack of this scheme of state protection which is sometimes used against them to offset their influence as we have seen in the case of Al Tawhid Wal Noor.

[254] Interviews with residents and MB affiliates, Shobra, Cairo, 2008; Al Tawhid Wal Noor is a series of clothes stores that was owned and run by Al Swirky, a businessman and an MB member. These shops scored an immense degree of success and popularity due to their wholesale prices that were quite competitive when compared to similar stores. Its degree of success was so massive that it virtually expanded to most of Cairo popular quarters, almost driving all of its competitors out of business. Meanwhile, the state was quite annoyed from Al Swirky due to his growing profits and sound ties with the financing of the MB. Eventually, Al Swirky was condemned in a civil court on the charge of polygamy. According to the accusation, he had married a fifth wife prior to the conclusion of the 90-day interim period that is mandated by the Islamic Shari'a after divorcing the fourth wife.

[255] Ibid

Resourcing the MB and the ISIs activities

More often than not, the sources of funding for the MB and the affiliated ISIs, such as *Al Jamme`yya Al Sharre`eyya* (JS) which will be elaborated upon in the upcoming section, are quite diverse and they surpass the stratum of benevolent individual contributions. Islamic businesses (owned and operated by MB members and affiliates) do exist and they act as investment depositories as well as legitimization façades for the resources of the MB. These businesses which are usually operative as sizable firms of whole-retail trade, furniture and home appliances stores, clothes and garment factories…etc are mostly utilized by the MB in order to hire and expand the network of individual incumbents and financial resources in a legitimate fashion that is active under the legal codes that govern the market. In the course of the aforementioned 2007 state clampdown over the MB, some state apparatuses, such as the police and the General Prosecutor, have considered this to be an act of 'money laundry' due to the illegal nature of the MB as a banned political organization and the direct links that the capital invested in most of these ventures has with the financial resources and contributions from key MB figures and personnel. And the cycle continues: the MB pumps in more money into these firms, which is subsequently invested and the revenues generated are then used to fund MB activities and so forth. According to state officials, the profit made by such firms is utilized to fund the various activities of the MB. Allegedly, the clampdown launched by state authorities against the so called 'financial arm' of the MB aimed at drying up the resources circulated within such ventures.[256]

[256] *Al Ahram*. February 7th, 2007. Vol. 131. Issue 43892. The list of accusations that the MB cadres were facing, as announced by the General Prosecutor, included: money laundering, receiving financial transactions from abroad in order to finance the activities of the MB and the utilization of the profits generated by several domestic firms in funding the operations of the committees of the MB in Egypt.

Here, an important query comes to mind: Does the financing of the MB and ISIs activities take place at the local (district) level or do the poorer areas receive support from elsewhere within the organization? In fact the MB and ISIs such as the JS enjoy a certain degree of decentralization that sometimes surpasses that of the NDP or the state-affiliated institutions. Whereas the JS enjoys a hierarchical structure that allows for the presence of a quasi-Board of Directors on the level of the district or the neighborhood, as shall be displayed below in detail, in the MB the decision-making process regarding the financial allocation and distribution of resources among the various regions/districts of Egypt rests mainly within the Guidance Bureau and the MB Shura Council. The implementation of such decisions is usually carried out by the Financial Committee, which is mainly comprised of a group of businessmen/merchants responsible for ensuring the proper allocation of such resources. The abovementioned arrested MB cadres, Khairat Al Shater and Hassan Malek, both belong to this committee.[257] By virtue of its mandate, and also due to the aforementioned observation regarding the relative absence of the NDP and its affiliates from the low-income communities, mostly the urban popular and the rural areas, the MB tends to focus a sizable portion of its financial and administrative resources within such poorer/popular areas.

Then another question also arises concerning the sources of funding of the MB and the ISIs and whether or not they are all domestic, as claimed by the majority of cadres and policymakers in these organizations. For example, the official books of the JS say that the Society's sources of income are all domestic, stemming from the endowments of the benevolent and wealthy sympathizing good doers and the

[257] *Al Ahram*. January 15th, 2007. Vol. 131. Issue 43869, *Al Dastour*. January 5th, 2007. p.16, and Interviews with MB affiliates, Cairo, July & August 2008

membership subscriptions all over Egypt. However, there are claims that some sizable funding to the JS and other ISIs comes also from wealthy contributors in the Gulf countries, particularly Saudi Arabia.[258] This is more observed in the case of the MB which, in particular in the heydays of its resurgence within the Egyptian polity in the 1970s, depended to a great deal on the financial support of the cadres that lived, worked and had considerable investments in the GCC states, especially in Saudi Arabia.[259]

Perhaps the friendly relations between the political regimes in the two states- Egypt and Saudi Arabia- would lead one to discard the possibility of this financial support happening on the level of Saudi state institutions for instance. However the close relationships between the ISIs in the two countries have been reported quite often. A case in a point here is the Islamic Solidarity Committee, an offshoot of the Egyptian Doctors' Syndicate with the mandate of organizing massive state-level campaigns to gather donations for the major Muslim crisis areas in the 1990s, mainly Bosnia, Afghanistan, and of course Palestine. The Committee had sound ties with a multiplicity of donors from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States and was eventually dissolved by the Egyptian state in 2000 due to the nature of its activities, which was perceived as a direct non-state threat to the sovereignty of the Egyptian state.[260]

Overall, in its attempts to curb the MB, the Egyptian state seems to have selected the path of targeting the individual cadres of the MB as it is easier to justify and publicize on the grounds of claims of criminal or security/political threats. Yet the tale is quite

[258] The reported relationship between some ISIs and petrodollars has been mentioned in some local pro-NDP newspapers and, among the populace in a place like Misr Al Qadima is believed to exist, mainly on the level of individual contributions. However the researcher has not met any documented evidence to substantiate this claim.
[259] Sameh Naguib (2005) *Al Ikhwan Al Moslemoun: Ro'eya Ishtirakeyya*. Cairo: Center for Socialist Studies. p.92-3 and interviews with MB cadres, Cairo, June 2009
[260] Interviews with Doctors' Syndicate members, Cairo, July 2009

different when it comes to ISIs; those service-oriented NGOs that do provide a very wide range of services to the common people in the popular quarters of Cairo and elsewhere. In the upcoming section, this will be somewhat dissected further as we delve into an exemplar case of what could be described as Egypt's most powerful ISI; *Al Jamm`eyya Al Sharr`eyya.*

Al Jamm`eyya Al Shar`eyya: Background and History

Al Jamme`yya Al Shar`eyya (JS) (which in Arabic means the Jurisprudence Society) is arguably Egypt's largest and most powerful ISI today. The array of activities that is sponsored by the JS includes a wide variety of services that range from building and renovating mosques and religious institutes to the sponsorship of orphans and aid and pension programs for the needy. The scale of the activities of JS is so massive to the extent that more than 261,000 children were enrolled in its orphan sponsorship program by the end of 2000. The sources of funding of the JS are predominantly local and, according to its own balance sheets, the Society does not receive funding from abroad.[261] These sources include, first, the annual membership fees of the members which are circa 100 LE per member (In 2000 the total number of JS members surpassed 2 million across Egypt). Furthermore, other sources of funding also include the endowments, donations and the various types of *waqf* granted to the Society from the wealthy, in addition the support it receives from the government, as a recognized charitable organization.[262]

[261] See page 151 for a discussion of the sources of funding of the JS.
[262] Nagwan Shiha (2003) The Accountability of NGOs Applied to Egypt: The Case of Al Jamm`eya Al Shar`eyya & Al Sa`id Cooperative for Education & Development (in Arabic). Cairo: Faculty of Economics & Political Science, Cairo University

On aggregate, the JS has a powerful scope as well as extensive networks of funding that are superior to those of the NDP with most of its affiliated NGOs and personnel combined. This Society has over 120 items for expenditures of welfare; under item no. 12, for example, which is dedicated to orphanage sponsorship; the Society had specified a budget that surpasses that of the entirety of the Ministry of Social Affairs. These organizations work under the label of Islam, of which *zakat* is a main pillar. If we put in mind that the majority of the revenue of *zakat* which is, by and large, paid by every Muslim, regardless of his/her social or economic background, one finds that it is only sensible for such organizations to try to control these massive budgets.[263]

Organizational structure

As illustrated in Figure 4.a, page 155, the hierarchical structure of the JS is quite elaborate and is characterized with a great degree of systemic institutionalization. The General Assembly is the inclusive entity in which all of the branches of the JS across Egypt are represented by three members, with one vote for each branch. The Assembly meets on annual basis and is typically mandated with tasks relating to the approval of the annual budget, the appointment of the General Treasurer and the election of the Executive Board. This Executive Board, on the other hand, is the de facto governing body of the JS. It is comprised of 15 members, who are usually nominated by the Senior Ulama Committee, and in fact the CEO of the Board has to be from the Senior Ulama Committee itself. The Executive Board is responsible for selecting the General Secretary from its members and monitoring and approving the bulk of the financial activities of the Society.

[263] Interviews with Iman Bibars, NDP Politics Committee member & Chairperson of the ADEW NGO, Cairo, June 5th, 2008 and Interviews with JS members, Cairo, July-August 2008

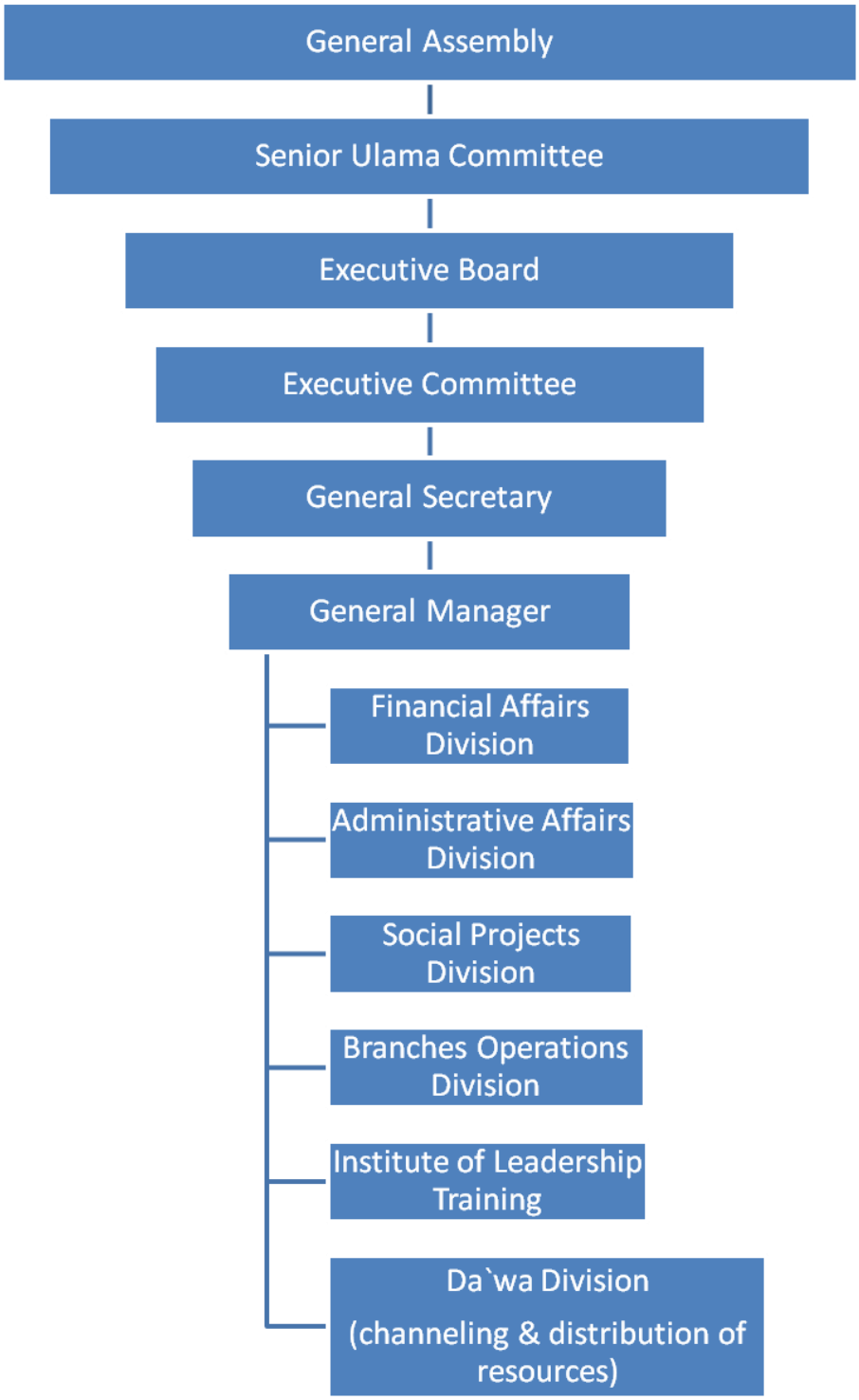

Illustration 4.a: The hierarchical structure of *Al Jamm`eya Al Shar`eyya*.
Source: Nagwan F. Shiha (2003) The Accountability of NGOs Applied to Egypt: The Case of Al Jamm`eya Al Shar`eyya and Al Sa`id Cooperative for Education & Development (in Arabic). Cairo: Faculty of Economics & Political Science, Cairo University.

The chief committees illustrated in Figure 4.a are self explanatory, but a noteworthy observation here would be the fact that these committees are also present on the level of the branches as well. Perhaps, for the purpose of the study at hand, one of the most important committees is the *da`wa* committee, mandated with the gathering and channeling of funds. This committee is also considered as the hub where the *do`at* of the Society operate and where the cadres and new recruits of the Society breed.[264]

The socioeconomic background of the members of the JS varies in accordance with their occupation within the hierarchy and the role they are ascribed to play in the context of the JS. For instance, looking at the Executive Board that was operational in the mid-1990s, one finds the 15 members of the board were mainly an amalgamation of Azharites (religious scholars from Azhar University) and small-medium size merchants. Whereas the presence of the Azharites is indeed crucial in order to provide the board with the expertise in the realm of religious guidance, the merchants and the businessmen are mainly responsible for supervising the financial affairs and the allocation of resources relating to the social welfare activities of the Society.[265]

In spite of the massive scale upon which the JS operates, the degree of awareness and dedication of its members still seem to be relatively high. In a cross sectional analysis that was carried out on a random sample of the members of the JS, it was shown that, despite the relatively mediocre educational background those members possessed (almost 35 percent barely had a high-school certificate), the majority of them had a clear vision of the goals and objectives of the society and were capable of identifying the aspired targets

[264]Nagwan F. Shiha (2003) The Accountability of NGOs Applied to Egypt: The Case of Al Jamm`eya Al Shar`eyya and Al Sa`id Cooperative for Education & Development (in Arabic). Cairo: Faculty of Economics & Political Science, Cairo University.
[265] Ihab A. Negm (1996) The Political Role of Islamic NGOs in Egypt: A Case Study of Al Jamm`eyya Al Shar`eyya (in Arabic) Cairo: Faculty of Economics & Political Science, Cairo University

that they are expected to achieve in terms of accomplishing tasks and recruitment of new cadres. On aggregate, the degree of accountability of the Society as a whole, in terms of the consistency of the General Assembly and Executive Board meetings and meeting the government's deadlines of submission of monitoring and evaluation reports and financial audits was quite high when compared to other local organizations working in the realm of social services. Also, the fact that the JS depends mainly on local sources of funding as opposed to the majority of the civil society organizations that primarily rest on foreign donations in undertaking their activities, makes the JS one of the most autonomous civil society organizations in Egypt.[266]

The political role of the JS and the relationship with the MB

Since its establishment, the JS was, according to its own charter, an apolitical civic organization that aims at spreading Islamic awareness and providing social and economic services to the lower echelons of the community; the needy and the deprived segments of the society. However, in practical terms the picture is somehow different. Looking at the typology of activities undertaken by the JS, particularly in the realm of social welfare as pointed out earlier, one notes that the scope of services provided by the JS substitutes a plethora of roles that are supposed to be fulfilled by the state. And with the resurgence of the MB in the 1970s, there has been a growing relationship of cooperation and synchronization between the JS and the activities of the MB. In addition

[266] Nagwan F. Shiha (2003) The Accountability of NGOs Applied to Egypt: The Case of Al Jamm`eya Al Shar`eyya and Al Sa`id Cooperative for Education & Development (in Arabic). Cairo: Faculty of Economics & Political Science, Cairo University.

to the pragmatic affiliation that was between the MB and the JS, the ideological spectrum of the Society also went parallel with the goals and objectives of the MB.[267]

For example, in the period between 1975 and 1978, *Al E`tessam*, the monthly periodical and the mouthpiece of the Society, called repeatedly for the right of the MB to be allowed back into the political arena as a recognized political force. The same periodical also led a vigorous attack on the regime in 1985, adopting the discourse of Mamoun Al Hodaiby, the General Guide of the Society at the time, by describing it as the right path when he refers to the government as a minority rule entity that captured rule by terrorism and forgery. In the same milieu, *Al E`tessam* also nominated the MB as the best alternative to the ruling party, in the light of the regime's irregularities against the MB candidates in the municipal elections of the same year.[268] Eventually, in 1990, the Mubarak regime dissolved the board of the JS due to its close ties with the MB. At that juncture, most of the members of the board were either fully fledged MB members or sympathizers. This confrontation forced the JS to tone down its affiliation with the MB, making it less pronounced, however, in practice, the linkages between the JS and the MB still prevail until today.[269]

Thus, the affiliation between the JS and the MB takes place on two main levels, first, on the ideological realm where one notes that the discourse of the Society on the macro-socioeconomic and political issues, as well as the micro-level daily affairs spectrum, corresponds largely with that of the MB. Here the example of *Al E`tessam*

[267] Ihab A. Negm (1996) The Political Role of Islamic NGOs in Egypt: A Case Study of Al Jamm`eyya Al Shar`eyya. Cairo: Faculty of Economics & Political Science, Cairo University.
[268] Hassan Ashour (1985) "*Al E`tessam yoshark fi Al Ihteffal Bzekra Al Za`eem*". Al E`tessam. Vol.46. Issue 2-3. Aug-Sep. p.3.
[269] Ihab A. Negm (1996) The Political Role of Islamic NGOs in Egypt: A Case Study of Al Jamm`eyya Al Shar`eyya. Cairo: Faculty of Economics & Political Science.

periodical stands out, where the publication voiced out the discourse of, not only the JS, but also that of the MB. More importantly however, on the pragmatic level, the interrelated scope of activities goes far beyond a mere resemblance of projects. For the most part, congruent membership in the two organizations is a recurrent case and it takes place on all echelons of the JS, as we have seen prior with the case of the board. On the lower echelons of the JS, this congruency of membership between the MB and the JS is a happening reality as well. For example, The Orphanage Sponsorship Program, the JS's biggest social project to date, is mainly funded by MB members and affiliates. Additionally, most of the health care and educational centers that are run by the Society almost strictly employ MB members and affiliates, in order to ensure the congruency in the line of thought and action.[270] In the upcoming section, more light shall be shed on the political role of the JS as we delve into the case of Misr Al Qadima.

Political Islam in Misr Al Qadima: The MB and The JS

The case of the JS in Misr Al Qadima draws some relevant findings concerning the political role of this society in Cairo's popular quarters. As mentioned earlier, the development of the JS in Misr Al Qadima coincides to a large degree with the role that it plays on the macro-level in a variety of Cairo's popular quarters. The branch of the JS was established in Misr Al Qadima in the early 1970s, coinciding with the resurgence of the ISIs post Nasser, and it gradually grew in terms of scope and magnitude of services, in line with the incremental withdrawal of the state from the arena of social welfare.

[270] Ibid; the observation regarding the MB affiliates' participation in the funding of the Orphanage Sponsorship Program is also well in place on the local (municipal) level. In Misr Al Qadmia, for instance, several MB affiliates have noted the linkage between some prominent Misr Qadima MB cadres and the funding of the program on the level of Misr Qadima district.

Initially, the JS branch focused its efforts on building new small mosques and renovating old ones. In addition to the regular prayers, these mosques were also utilized in social welfare activities such as, providing aid to the poorer families, organizing private tuition sessions to students outside the time of the prayers and eventually the Society also succeeded in constructing a new kindergarten for the families of the area. Then in 1979, the presence of the JS in the area was boosted tremendously when the MB candidate, Hajj Hassan Al Gamal, became the Misr Al Qadima MP in the Parliament. Al Gamal's role in pivoting the scope and magnitude of the JS branch was instrumental, and he (backed by the MB of course) supplied the mosques and youth belonging to the JS with copious financial and moral support. For the MB, this constituency was immensely important as it represented a strong electoral and political foothold for the Brotherhood which, after all, is still considered as the political melting pot which is supported by the majority of the Islamist forces in the area.[271]

The spectrum of services and activities provided by the JS in Misr Al Qadima kept progressing at a steady pace, coinciding with the consolidation and continuous growth of political Islamism across Egypt, and by the mid 1990s the Society was, by and large, the biggest, richest and most resourceful social welfare institution in the entire quarter. In addition to the aforementioned basic services that it initiated its activities in the area with, the JS now sponsors a vocational training center for the youth of the area and organizes, on regular basis, a variety of small markets and conventions for selling the products manufactured by the JS members and affiliates. The association between the cadres working in the JS and the MB is a known fact now in the area and at times of

[271] Ahmed Abdallah and Ahmed Siam (1996) *Al Mosharaka Al Sha`beya Fi Hay Ain Al Sira Bel Qahera*. Cairo: Al Jeel Center.

elections, most recently in the 2005 parliamentary elections, the resources, networks, and personnel of the Society are usually mobilized to support the MB candidates. Mostly by virtue of being MB affiliates and sympathizers, and due to the supposed state-imposed apolitical nature of the JS, the mobilization of these JS cadres and the resources in their acquisition often appears to be voluntary and based on individual initiative. The venues of JS personnel support to the MB include: utilizing JS offices to organize campaigning activities, distributing and hanging campaigning material and posters, and publicizing for MB candidates among networks of families, friends and personal contacts in the area.[272]

Jamm`eyya Shar`eyya in Misr Al Qadima: Hajj Mohamed: the Lesser Notable in action?

In accordance with the abovementioned, a field visit to the JS headquarters in Misr Al Qadima was crucial. In fact, the building of the JS in Misr Qadima is very hard to miss. On the main road connecting between `Ain Sirra and Manial, the signposts of the JS stand out signifying the paramount location of its headquarters. At first, it is somehow unclear whether the entry to the office of the Society is the same to that of the Mosque, but then, as the housekeeper of the Mosque ensures that the visitors would take their shoes off upon entering the premise, it shows that the office of the JS is literally located inside the mosque.[273]

[272] Ibid and Interviews with Misr Qadima residents
[273] In the office, there were three men, all bearded and dressed in the traditional Arab-Islamic *Jallabeya*. The writer introduced himself as a researcher who is investigating the activities of the social organizations in the area, and he was of course met with some suspicion. The person in charge (Hajj Mohamed) said that he would not talk to me unless there is an official note from a "national" research entity, indicating the nature of my research. However, after some effort, he reluctantly agreed to talk a bit about the goals, objectives, and achievements of the Society on the local level.

Hajj Mohamed is the person in charge of the JS office is Misr Al Qadima. From the first instance, one notes some resemblance between Hajj Mohamed's profile and that of the Lesser Notable. He introduced himself as a leather merchant and a son of the area, in which he spent all of his life. Later on in the discussion, Hajj Mohamed clarified that he thinks that the educational background of the person is irrelevant if he wants to join the ranks of the JS as long as he holds a good reputation in the area and possesses piety and moral goodness. In essence, Hajj Mohamed was somewhat referring to people like himself, as he only holds a high school diploma, yet by piety and charitable activities he was able to hold this position at the apex of the JS in the area.[274]

From the onset, Hajj Mohamed assured that the Society is mainly a charitable organization. He said that there is no other entity that provides such a scope of services to the people of the area, and asserted the fact that the JS is entirely self-funded, which adds up to its autonomy.[275] The program of action of the Society is divided into three main sectors: the awareness (*da`wa*) sector, the aid sector, and the activities sector.

I- Awareness

The *da`wa* aspect lies at the heart of the goals and objectives of the Society, according to Hajj Mohamed. Raising the religious awareness of the people of the area is

[274] Interview with Hajj Mohamed, Manager of JS, Misr Al Qadima, Cairo, July 16th, 2008. Indeed the prime questions that had to be asked with regard to maintaining the close connection that the JS has with the MB and the sort of assistance that it provides for their candidates to the Parliamentary and the Municipal Council elections could not be asked outright, provided the sensitive nature of the issue and the fact that such linkage is officially prohibited by law. Nonetheless, Hajj Mohamed tackled these points as he was presenting the case of the JS in the area, for he probably felt it was his duty to provide a proper portrayal of the scope and magnitude of the activities of the JS.

[275] Referring to the JS as a totally self-funded organization is not completely true. Just like all other national NGOs, the JS receives partial financial support from the state. This, in addition to the sizable endowments that the JS receives from individual and entrepreneurial contributors- sometimes amassing tens of millions of pounds a year- constitute sources of funding that could be described as external sources that are not generated directly from the activities of the Society. See page 153 for an overview of the funding scheme of the JS.

of paramount importance, and this is achieved via regular lectures by key figures of religion, Quran lessons all year round, discount trips for *`umra* and *hajj*, an enhanced library of religion that is open to the public and a periodical journal that is published by the Society, *Al Tibyan*, apparently the successor of *Al E`tessam* periodical cited earlier.[276]

II-Aid

The aid program orchestrated by the Society is probably the strongest and most viable means by which the JS can extend its services to the populace. Under this program, The *kafala* projects that aim at sponsoring the orphans, widows and female divorced members of the community and the patients in need, are quite extensive and usually provide those segments of the society with their financial needs in the form of grants. In most of the cases, a monthly stipend is also maintained in order to assist those people in meeting their financial commitments and, in case of senior citizens, a pension program is also available. In the orphanage projects, probably the biggest venture of the Society according to Hajj Mohamed and as was previously stated in the course of this study, the participation of the people is viewed as an incentive in itself, "It is a service provided to them by giving them a window of opportunity to take part in a charitable activity that will bring them closer to God. There is a certain system by which this project operates and it depends on extended networking. Every new member joining the program, i.e. supplying the Society with donations, will be expected to bring in five new donors and so on."[277]

[276]Interview with Hajj Mohamed, Manager of JS, Misr Al Qadima, Cairo, July 16th, 2008.

[277]Ibid; actually most donors attempt contacting more than 5 additional donors, albeit not always successful in bringing in these potential contributors to donate. The mere attempt of contacting such potential contributors is viewed as a religious duty and is often seconded and encouraged by the facilitators of the JS.

Indeed the Society follows a fairly modern scheme of organizational management, as stated by other interviewees, predominantly depending on mapping, networking…etc:

> The Society [JS] is very well organized, and it is indeed successful in infiltrating popular neighborhoods, often via modern methods of social work that are usually followed in social service NGOs...They begin by mapping the area, detecting the social and economic background of its population and the heads of the households within the neighborhood, then start networking with the families, knowing their needs and the kind of services they require. For instance, when the head of the household on their payroll passes away, they immediately allocate the necessary funds for the funeral and provide the family with a monthly income. They also sponsor the children, and supply the family with the basic clothing and school expenses in accordance with the number of their children enrolled in schools.[278]

This outlook on the JS activities in the community also echoes with the narratives of the people of the area who assured that the social services provided by the JS and its personnel in times of dire need have often surpassed the similar support services that the state might sometimes provide.

A lot of Misr Al Qadima residents recall the aftermaths of the 1992 earthquake when many houses in the neighborhood either collapsed or were subject to severe damage and, subsequently, thousands of people were literally left homeless. The JS along with other ISIs were actually much quicker to react than the state authorities and from the first day they initiated a massive campaign to supply the people with blankets and food supplies. After a few days, the police intervened and banned the ISIs from pursuing their campaign, claiming that it was illegal as it has not been authorized by the relevant state authorities, primarily the Ministry of Social Affairs. And it was not until a few days later

[278] Interview with Iman Bibars, NDP Politics Committee member & Chairperson of the ADEW NGO, Cairo, June 5th, 2008. In this regard Bibars' take on the JS activities in Misr Qadima is a relevant testimony as she was subject to fierce competition from those JS/MB cadres, being a prominent Misr Qadima NDP cadre herself.

that the Ministry started to react and supplied those people with food and temporary shelters.[279] Here, it is safe to conclude that this personalized scheme of services provided by the JS is unmatched by the government or the party and that it sure plays a immense role in increasing the popularity of the MB on the ground, especially in the popular quarters, in which economic and social hardships are facts of life.

Under the aid program of the JS, direct donations are additionally granted to the people of the area, supplying them with their basic needs: covers and sheets in the winter, food supplies…etc. There is also the marriage services section, providing matchmaking services to the young Muslim men and women who prefer a guaranteed and well-monitored process of selection of their future partners. The medical sector is quite crucial as well as it provides the needy with a variety of medical services that are free of charge. One of the most important service units under the Aid program also is the emergency fund which is allocated for the immediate need of individuals (such as the demolition of one's home or the exposure to an accident…etc).[280]

III- Activities

In addition to the aid and awareness programs, the activities sector is mainly concerned with the needs that require more specialized expertise, and it involves a sizable amount of outsourcing of human resources that might not be available within the ranks of the Society. "Most importantly, there is the specialized daycare center for the children and the daily medical clinic which employs skilled physicians and nurses that are capable

[279]Interviews with Misr Qadima residents; the post-1992 earthquake standoff that took place between state authorities and the ISIs in several parts of Cairo is pointed out in Chapter I, p.13.
[280] Interview with Hajj Mohamed, Manager of JS, Misr Al Qadima, Cairo, July 16th, 2008

of dealing with the more severe medical conditions that require some enhanced medical attention and scrutiny."[281]

In fact, the comparatively wide scope of services provided by the JS in Misr Al Qadima means that some of these services will have to be relatively limited compared to others. Setting the priorities of expenditure takes place on the local (branch) level in accordance with the amount of funding allocated from the central JS authority and, here, a degree of decentralization is somewhat granted to the local branches, allowing them to set their own priorities in accordance with the socioeconomic and political particularities of the area in which the branch operates.[282] Overall, Hajj Mohamed reckons that the most important thing that the JS has done to the community of Misr Al Qadima was providing the people with some of their needs, which the state has failed to deliver: "Look outside…you'll find this bread outlet across the road. This booth was funded and supervised by the Society. It is such mundane services that assist the simple people here the most…In the midst of the recent bread/food crisis, people were in dire need for these basic necessities and the government was too busy to help them. This is when we come in!"[283] On the other hand, Hajj Mohamed assures that there are no political connotations for the activities of the JS. "We have no political agenda…we help the people of the area become better Muslims and provide them with some of the means by which they can get by their daily hardships, and if you want to call this political action then be it, but, on the official level of the JS, we have nothing to do with elections or party politics."[284]

[281] Ibid.
[282] See p. 43-44 for a note on the priorities and limitations of the array of JS services in Misr Al Qadima
[283] Interview with Hajj Mohamed, Manager of JS, Misr Al Qadima, Cairo, July 16th, 2008
[284] Ibid.

Nevertheless, despite Hajj Mohamed's reluctance to admit the linkage with the MB or other Islamist activists, right outside the building of the Society it does not require much attention to notice the fliers of the MB candidates for the parliament and the Municipal Council hanging over the walls of JS headquarters. Here, the sympathy with the MB is rather explicit both in terms of the rhetoric and political views adopted by the JS members and affiliates as well as the sizable level of coordination present on the operative level as pointed out earlier. When asked about their political viewpoints and allegiances, those JS members who were willing to voice out their opinion stated that, unlike the current state politicians and regime personnel which are tarnished with corruption and have discarded the demands of the people for years, the MB actually deserves the support of the people in the community as it has, oppositely, served the area and provided it with some basic services.[285]

Illustration 4.b: HQ of the JS in Misr Al Qadima

Illustration 4.c: Bread Outlet by the JS HQ

[285] Interviews with JS members, February and March 2009

The JS vis-à-vis the State in Misr Al Qadima: A Note on the priorities and limitations of the JS

By and large, the influential role that the JS is playing in Cairo's popular quarters is defined by and further consolidated due to the vacuum that has been gradually growing with the ongoing state withdrawal from the arena of welfare services. The bulk of services provided by the JS could be classified into two prime categories: First, a set of services that have been almost totally abandoned by the state at certain junctures, such as the abovementioned example of the 1992 earthquake catastrophe, and, second, an array of services that compete with, and usually are superior to, similar services that are supposed to be the provided by the state yet, for a multitude of reasons, have deteriorated in terms of quality and/or quantity. The example of the JS bread outlets belongs to the latter category.

Hence it could be argued that the JS has been quite savvy in prioritizing its set of activities in Misr Al Qadima and the similar popular quarters of Cairo. After all, and despite its considerably massive scope of activities, the JS is a social organization that has a specific budget with limitations and it has to prioritize its set of activities. The JS has more than 120 items of activities on its agenda but if we are to interpret the prioritization of these activities by the budget allocation, for instance, we will find that, according to its annual plan and budget and as testified by the members of the Society, the *kafala* (sponsorship) programs are at the core of the JS service sectors with a budget that exceeded L.E. 150 Million ($ US 28 Million) in 2000.[286] These programs typically aim at providing the needy and socially devastated segments in the society; orphans,

[286] Sameh Naguib (2005) *Al Ikhwan Al Moslemoun: Ro'eya Ishtirakeyya*. Cairo: Center for Socialist Studies

widowers…etc, with constant financial and material support in the form of stipends and regular personalized social counseling. For example, as stated prior, more than 250,000 children all over the country are enrolled in the Orphanage Program, making it the biggest and perhaps most viable orphanage service program in all of Egypt.[287] In doing so, the JS has firmly established its stature within the Cairene popular quarters as an advocate of the poor and the disenfranchised classes. Unsurprisingly, when asked where would they go in case of extreme financial need or if there was a sudden catastrophe or a crisis in the area, even those that do not consider themselves sympathetic with the Islamist tendencies of the JS, responded that the JS is a much more reliable and helpful social service organization than the NDP office and most of its affiliated NGOs in Misr Al Qadima. Actually most of the respondents said that they are more likely to seek the JS for assistance in such contexts than its NDP counterparts.[288]

ISIs and the MB in Misr Al Qadima: `Ain Al Sirra versus Misr Al Qadima proper

As illustrated in Chapter III, Misr Al Qadima is composed of two main districts, Misr Al Qadima proper (the old quarter) and `Ain Al Sirra, the relatively newer quarter that was constructed in the 1950s. The two areas share some commonalities due to their adjacent geographical proximity, particularly in terms of their socioeconomic features; i.e. the prime economic problems that they suffer from, the predominant issues of state withdrawal from the services sector, the deteriorating status of their infrastructural utilities…etc. Yet the two also have some clear differences, for example, with regard to the professions and socioeconomic backgrounds of their inhabitants, as well as the

[287] Interviews with JS members, February and March 2009
[288] Ibid and Interviews with Misr Qadima residents, Rahraha Café, January 2009

geographical origin of their current residents. There is a higher rate of rural/urban immigrants that reside in `Ain Al Sirra than there is in Misr Al Qadima proper for example, and this in turn affects the sort of political affiliations and activities within the two areas considerably.[289]

The socioeconomic differences between the two quarters help shape the kind of ISIs and MB policies and activities in each of them. On aggregate, it could be argued that, although they are actively operational in the two areas, the MB and the ISIs are more present and influential in `Ain Al Sirra than in Misr Qadima proper. Hajj Ahmed Najar, the secretary of the *shiyakha* (district) of the NDP in Misr Al Qadima, echoes this observation as he states that the overall socioeconomic profile of the various constituencies of Misr Al Qadima plays a paramount role in determining the prowess of the MB and the affiliated ISIs within these areas.[290]

Hajj Najar runs a car accessories shop in the area as well as a small travel agency and his family has been residing there for several generations. He also operates the People's Services Office of the NDP. By and large, Najar could be considered as a Lesser Notable with a respectable social and economic profile, based on his profitable business and sound reputation as a family notable with strong ties with the members of his community, a limited educational background, and a sizable political role to fulfill as an NDP member and a close aide and adviser to the MPs and the municipal council members of the area. When asked if he thinks there is more presence for the MB on the popular level rather than the NDP in Misr Al Qadima, he stated that it really varies according to the socioeconomic status of the area. "We have the Sunni mosque nearby

[289] See Chapter III, pages 99-102, for a detailed overview of the two main districts of Misr Qadima.
[290] Interview with Hajj Ahmed Najar, June 12th, 2008

and it has been used by some MB figures, but now there is a tight security-hold on such venues and they are not operational. In fact, a few years ago they were, but there seems to be a security revival nowadays that was largely successful in halting the activities of their cadres." However, Hajj Najar states that in some other areas the MB cadres might be more active due to the socioeconomic context. In some areas of `Ain Al Sirra, for instance, and due to the harsh conditions that people live in there, it is easier for the MB to attract more popularity. People there are mainly manual laborers and they suffer from extremely rough living conditions, so it is easier for them to be polarized in the direction of the Islamists or in the direction of drugs and crime...etc.[291]

Hajj Najar notes that whereas the prime beneficiaries from the social welfare activities of the ISIs and the MB mostly reside within the poorer areas of Misr Al Qadima, the cadres that in return ensure the delivery of these services, i.e. the doctors and the social workers who organize such activities, are not necessarily so. "A sizable number of those cadres have to be trained or educated in certain fields in order to be able to deliver these services…These expertise are not always available in the poorer areas of `Ain Al Sirra itself and they have to be recruited from other places; such as Misr Al Qadima proper or Manial for instance."[292]

The politicization of Misr Al Qadima: Mechanisms of political cooptation of The MB and The NDP

As stated in Chapter III, the scheme of participation in the official political process; mainly via voting in municipal and parliamentary elections, is defined by the harsh economic conditions that the majority of the locals of the area suffer from. In order

[291] Ibid.
[292] Ibid.

to shed more light on some of the features of this process, a meeting with Hajj Sayyed Abdelaal was well in place. Hajj Abdelaal was described by the people of the locale as a Misr Qadima veteran as well as being a "vote expert". He was a prominent leather craftsman and merchant and is now retired due to the lack of commercial opportunities for profiteering from small sized skin tannery and manufacturing workshops, thanks to the oligopoly of the major leather tycoons of the area, elaborated upon later in further detail in Chapter V in the testimonies of NDP cadre, Ms. Hannan Al Saidi, and others. Hajj Abdelaal suffers from very harsh economic conditions and has to feed an entire family. He considers himself quite a politicized person who has witnessed the ins and outs of the Misr Qadima polity and he has a few things to say about the political affairs of his district.

Hajj Abdelaal says that he has stopped working primarily because of the market recession and instability caused by the quasi-monopoly exercised by a few big names in the field of skin processing and tannery. "It became too costly for people like us to maintain their businesses in the face of those unequally titanic competitors. Now I have friends who help me with the daily costs of living…I have the responsibility of feeding a big family that is comprised of five sons and four grandchildren."[293] Hajj Abdelaal asserts that a lot of people are now in his position; people that had a profitable profession which is now idle due to the new economic realities that forced them out of business.[294] He

[293]Interviews with Hajj Sayed Ahmed Abdelaal, January & February 2008.
[294]The new economic realities Hajj Sayed refers to are mainly the neoliberal economic policies adopted by the government in the post 1991 era. This bundle of policies included, in addition to an overall emphasis on the reduction of the role of the state, a firm preference for private sector ventures at the expense of the public ones, which had become incrementally less profitable. As the 'big' private skin tannery factories flourished in Misr Qadima, and in accordance with the 'economies of scale' rationale, there was only room for those mega-factories that pump-in sizable investments-primarily in joint ventures with Italian FDI-and operate on a large scale to swallow the market. As a result, the smaller tanneries that Hajj Sayed and thousands of others were working in were almost entirely driven out of business and only 4 or 5

insists that these new realities have to be put in full consideration in order to comprehend the so called process of "political participation" in the area of Misr Qadima. "Political participation is existent but it is entirely money laden. People who participate get direct financial benefit. There is no secrecy in this matter and candidates compete to pay more for the voters…All of my sons are registered in the electoral schedules and get direct material benefit for their participation. The benefits vary from hard cash to bags of basic supplies (oil, sugar, bread…etc) that are usually distributed among voters prior to and during the electoral season."[295]

Being a resident of the area for 50 years or so now, Hajj Abdelaal affirmed that this mode of voter bribery and state absence started appearing and increasing since the 1995 and the 2000 parliamentary elections and reached the peak with the 2005 elections. These recent years witnessed an immense rise in the role played by businessmen and an increasing disappearance of the state. People in this district and other similarly popular quarters have been suffering from an apparent lack in the basic services that are supposed to be provided by the state. He said that, for instance, if you look just around the corner here you will find that the main bread outlet in our neighborhood has been idle for over 10 years. This might seem like a simple service yet it is crucial for the lives of the thousands of citizens residing here and in other areas in Misr Qadima, and for whom the scarcity of the state-subsidized bread, produced by such outlets, has been a major problem. "Now the reopening of this outlet has become the item on the top of the list of all the local council candidates in our area. Will the elected ones succeed in doing that?

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businessmen were left in control of the skin-tannery business in the area. In Chapter V this case will be displayed with further scrutiny as the researcher tackles the association those businessmen have with the NDP.

[295] Interviews with Hajj Sayed Ahmed Abdelaal, January & February 2008.

Well, thus far it is not clear, but if they do then the credit will go for them and not for the state. The state has turned a blind eye on us and millions of others that are like us all over the country."[296]

Hajj Abdelaal stated that the mechanisms of voter bribery are not only exercised by the NDP candidates, and that other political forces do the same as well. In fact most of the viable candidates in these recent elections were either NDP or independent candidates, not belonging to an official political grouping. Practically speaking, there are no other political forces (parties) that play any meaningful role in the areas, except for the MB of course, whose candidates run as independent. This in part was caused by the official ban imposed on the MB, forcing all of their candidates to run as independent candidates. On the other hand, throughout these recent elections as well, the NDP has been following its well-known policy of co-opting the winning independent candidates into its ranks post the elections,[297] which also didn't make much difference for the voters in terms of the orientation of the candidate prior to the elections. Also being independent, those candidates usually have a greater flexibility in maneuvering around various social and political policies and adherences provided that they didn't have to stick to a certain ideology or party platform. Yet, on aggregate, the same line was followed by most of the electoral candidates, be it for the parliament or the local council; networks of familial and communitarian support, along with the financial resources, are essential for entering the elections. The formula is quite simple and straightforward; some candidates grant

[296] Ibid.
[297] In the 2000 and the 2005 parliamentary elections, the NDP adopted a certain tactic of co-opting the "independent" candidates-those that were not running under the label of any official political party- who succeed in the elections after the electoral process is over. It is only via this tactic that the NDP was able to secure a majority in the parliament in 2000 and 2005.

L.E.100 per vote[298], while others give L.E.50 in addition to the bag of supplies. People are in dire need and it's only natural for them to accept this scheme to sell their votes willingly.[299]

The MB in Misr Qadima's old quarter versus `Ain Al Sirra

As stated earlier, in general, the MB enjoys a relatively stronger standing in `Ain Al Sirra as opposed to the old quarter of Misr Al Qadima, the chief reason being the abundance of potential beneficiaries from the services of the MB and the JS in `Ain Al Sirra in comparison to the old quarter. This note was emphasized by the people of the two areas, who noted that the MB and the JS are more present and active in `Ain Al Sirra. The socioeconomic context and historical experience of the area second this observation, and the accounts of the people of `Ain Al Sirra suggest that, with the overwhelming sentiment of being let down by the Egyptian state, the appeal of an organization like the JS has to be quite resonant in such an area. In addition, the MB cadres seem to be considerably savvy when it comes to their political performance in the legislative or municipal councils. In fact, over the years, the MB has worked very hard to profit from the tarnished image of the regime and the NDP as a corrupt and inefficient entity, by aiming at providing the counterexample of that, primarily via keeping the sound ties with the grassroots social base in these popular quarters thriving. Currently, one out of the four MPs of Misr Al Qadima is an MB cadre, and he is, by far, much more organized, down-to-earth, and in touch with the constituency, more than the three other MPs, two of whom are NDP cadres, according to the testimony of various inhabitants of the area. Most of

[298] An L.E was almost equivalent to 0.2 $ US by 2008 exchange rates.
[299] Interviews with Hajj Sayed Ahmed Abdelaal, Cairo, January and February 2008

those inhabitants were actually NDP aides and NGO workers. This also coincides with what Shehata and Stacher suggest with regard to the successful approach that the MB has been following with their electoral constituencies, unlike the NDP which is lagging behind in this realm, especially in the popular urban and rural quarters.[300]

Hajj Abdelaal notes a significant difference however that characterized the 2005 parliamentary elections, which is the rise in the role of the NGOs. Initially, he recalls, it had only been the Islamist foundations (ISIs) that were pro-active in this realm in the 1980s and 1990s. More recently similar NGOs that are affiliated with NDP figures started entering the sphere of social services. The role of an organization like the JS has often been pivotal in the electoral process. The HQ of the JS in Misr Al Qadima has usually been in the service of the MB candidates, acting as the base of their electoral campaigns. During the elections, there is usually some close scrutiny between the social services provided by the JS and the activities of the MB candidates. For example, when the MB candidate associates himself with the wide array of services provided by the JS; it is likely for the voter to consider the benefits that he/she shall receive when the MB candidate makes it to office. Perhaps starting with the 2005 parliamentary elections then the 2007 municipal elections, similar NDP-affiliated NGOs entered the arena of politically-driven social services.[301]

When asked about the lesser notabilities of the area and whether he thinks they play a major role in the polity of Misr Qadima or not, Hajj Abdelaal made a reference to the *biytkabarluh* figures, those traditional figures of authority in the popular quarters of

[300] Samer Shehata and Joshua Stacher (2006) "The Brotherhood Goes to Parliament". Middle East Report, Issue 240, Fall. Available Online: http://www.merip.org/mer/mer240/shehata_stacher.html and Interviews, Misr Qadima, June 2008. Web. 17 Oct. 2008
[301] Interviews with Hajj Sayyed Ahmed Abdelaal, January & February 2008

Cairo and who were introduced in detail earlier in chapters I and II. He affirmed that they are largely pivotal, if not as the candidates then as the main reservoirs of votes for the candidates, who are most likely to be lesser notable figures as well. There are different categories of what we would describe as lesser notabilities and the most powerful of them are the ones that are capable of acquiring a viable political role, which is mainly achieved via controlling votes; i.e. by being able to mobilize a certain number of votes in the favor of a certain electoral candidate during the time of elections.[302]

This scheme of vote allocation is possible only when the *biytkabarluh* figure makes a reputable name for himself within the community and that is dependent upon two things; first, the financial capacity that enables the notable to endow some sound benefits to supporters and members of the family/clan/community…etc, and, second, a strong social standing within his clan/community as a man-of -good and a moral leader.

> This social/moral role is also quite important as it establishes a good reputation for the person as a pious notable and, you know, in our community this persona of giving, helpfulness, and piety is essential if a certain figure is to gain credibility and popularity. I think that most of them don't have a political line (agenda) of any sort…some of them end up allying with the NDP as this guarantees state support and good ties with the police, while others belong to the MB as it provides them with more popularity…In areas like ours, simply going against the NDP, the party of the government, could make one very popular due to the distaste that the inhabitants have developed towards the party and the consequences of the policies that they see that it stands for; mainly corruption, biases against the poor and the marginalized, economic stagnation...etc.[303]

Yet this is not always the case. Sometimes, associating a candidate with the NDP could be a plus due to the sound linkage with the state authorities and the anticipated benefits this could reap for the people of the neighborhood. Overall, there is not a certain rule or

[302] Ibid.
[303] Ibid.

logic that governs this point and it is up for the activities and the services that are provided by the relevant candidates, along with the scope of services provided by the ISIs in the area, to determine whether an association with the NDP is a favorable notion for an electoral candidate or not in a specific district.

The Lesser Notables of Misr Al Qadima: Exemplar roles in mediation and conflict

The taxonomy of the Lesser Notable displayed earlier via the example of Hajj Mohamed of the JS is in fact a recurrent reality in the polity of Misr Al Qadima and is likely to be sought for utilization by the NDP and the MB alike, due to its sound political agency and the abundance of patron-client networks in its possession. Just like the majority of popular areas, the *kbir* (notable) plays a paramount role in the community of Misr Al Qadima. Madiha Ahmed, a social worker that has worked closely with the electoral campaigns in Misr Al Qadima notes, "If a problem erupts between me and a certain person and remains unresolved, it is very likely for me to target the notable of the area/community/extended family or clan that this person belongs to and he (the *kbir*) will be able to resolve the dispute. The stature of these notables is usually determined according to their position within the family or clan, in addition to the size of resources they possess".[304]

An example that could be cited here in the area of Misr Al Qadima is someone like Hajj Gad Megahed. He is an affluent merchant with very little or no education and enjoys a very prestigious standing within the Megahed family from Upper Egypt:

> A few days ago he was visited by another merchant and a quarrel erupted between the two, which ended up with the visiting merchant beaten severely by Megahed and his people. The beaten merchant reported the

[304] Interview with Madiha Ahmed, Cairo, June 14th, 2008.

> case to the police, who, in turn, contacted Megahed. This conversation took place while my husband was there…The police asked Megahed whether he wants this merchant released from the police station or not and Megahed responded that this man (the beaten merchant) is a hazard to the community and that he should not be released until he is straightened. So, ironically, the man who got beaten ended up in prison for a few days, simply because he antagonized the wrong person.[305]

Such cases happen on daily basis, and they regularly reflect a high degree of coordination between those *kbir* figures and the police stations of the areas within which they operate. Of course this involves a multitude of services and resources allocated to those police stations and personnel.

Hajj Megahed was therefore capable of resolving disputes between people because of these sound ties with the police authorities and also by virtue of his standing as one of the head-figures of the Megahed family. Yet getting him to act as the problem-solver also involves him benefiting from certain resources or services that could be given to him in return for the problem-solving service that he provides. Logically, the bigger the service provided, the higher the price. Figures like Hajj Megahed are quite influential and a few of them are well known in the area. There is also Tawfiq Diab, Ramadan Abu Lebda, Waheed Hemdan(currently a Local Council member and originally an *'ahwagy* (café waiter) who now owns his own café and is also the right hand of Ramadan E`lewa, and Fathy Gelid(an MP with sound Islamist tendencies and ties with the MB now).[306] In fact, all of the aforementioned seemingly share the features of the Lesser Notables and their political affiliation seems to be irrelevant as some of them have actually swung back and forth between the NDP and the MB. This will be rather displayed in the upcoming section as we scrutinize the category of the Lesser Notables associated with the NDP.

[305] Ibid.
[306] Ibid.

The notables and the household in Misr Al Qadima: Job creation

Given their sound social stature within the popular quarters of a district like Misr Qadima, the Lesser Notables are usually given the role of 'natural leaders' who are typically approached and sought by the residents to facilitate their everyday mundane affairs. In addition to the generic services that are provided in the name of a particular notable or his affiliated NGO to the general public, usually in the form of health and education facilities or food and other basic services supplies, there is also a more personalized scheme of services and favors that is offered by the notables. Added up to their conciliatory role in mediation and conflict, some Misr Qadima notables, especially those of the MB, are well noted for their ability to provide jobs where applicable to the people of the area, mainly due to the interconnected nature of the financial and administrative networks operated by the Islamist political activists displayed earlier. "In Misr Al Qadima certain notables are capable of finding us jobs, better than any public company or Labor Ministry. Some of them, like Ramadan E`lewa and Fathy Gelid, only require the name of the person seeking employment and sometimes his/her C.V and regardless of how well-qualified the person is, he/she will get a job. Of course, the employment favors asked by those that are more pious and religiously committed are very unlikely to be turned down."[307]

Often, those notables grant employment either in their commercial ventures or within the vast interconnected network of commercial activities that is maintained by the MB affiliates and cadres in Misr Al Qadima and elsewhere in Cairo. Indeed those MB affiliated notables could be considered as a very efficient employment agency in the quarters of Misr Al Qadima, which augments their sociopolitical profile with an

[307] Interviews with Misr Qadima residents, May, 2008

economic dimension that complements their role as key-figures of authority and influence in the popular quarter.[308]

Lesser notable figures vis-à-vis the MB and the state in Misr Al Qadima

In Misr Al Qadima, the Lesser Notables that are affiliated with the MB have a paramount role to play in the polity and they serve a multitude of functions as shown prior in the cases of the JS and the MB, where the intermediary members that are concerned with building and enhancing the ties with the social base mostly belong to this category of notability. Despite the fact that the MB has almost boycotted the most recent municipal elections that took place in 2008 (an arena which is now a prime target of consolidation for the NDP also via the utilization of the lesser notability as will be discussed later in Chapter V), the stature of the MB notables is still quite sound in the area of Misr Al Qadima. A prime tactic that is exercised by the NDP in this regard is to attempt to co-opt those figures of lesser notability to its side in order to strengthen its patronage machine in the popular quarters.[309]

In this area, Hajj Bakr Omar, who comes from a traditionally MB affiliated family, poses a good case for the interaction of such figures with the state authorities. Hajj Omar is a wholesale/retail trader in Misr Al Qadima and has been a *beitkabarlu* figure in the area due to his good repute and extensive familial ties and connections. He ran for parliamentary elections in 1995 and 2000 and was allegedly banned by the state security from proceeding in the electoral process, despite the fact that he won more votes than any other candidate did. When it came to the most recent 2005 elections however, he

[308] Ibid.
[309] Interview with Hannan Saidi, NGO Chairperson and Misr Qadima NDP Committee Member. Cairo, April 30th, 2008.

actually joined the NDP and, subsequently, succeeded in becoming an MP. Nonetheless, after state security reports that connect between him and the prominent MB MP Yossry Bayoumy, another Lesser Notable who is officially linked to the MB and who reportedly supported him with votes and resources; it seems now that the state security is again considering him as a threat, in spite of his official affiliation with the NDP.[310]

Picture 4.c: Posters of MB candidate Yossry Bayoumy

Conclusions

As we have seen throughout this chapter, it is safe to assume that the MB has succeeded in gaining more access to Cairo's popular bases, and more so than other political forces, including those political forces associated with the Egyptian state itself. By and large, The MB has been tactically savvy in dealing with the populace for most of its history. In many aspects, the Brotherhood has utilized and helped enhance the state of Islamization that has been prevailing in the Egyptian society and exploited it to increase its popularity on the street level:

[310] Ibid

> Look at slogans like "Islam is the Solution!" Quite generic, yet effective and wholesome in a comparatively religious society like ours. Such simple and general themes and mottos are powerful tools in the hands of the MB as well as other Islamists, yet it is important to assure that these slogans by themselves are not the only tactics used by the MB. They are used in conjunction with pragmatic and street level operative schemes that aim at providing services to ordinary citizens. In a sense, the MB represents the only alternative available to the state-sponsored NDP, associated with a tarnished image of corruption and inefficiency.[311]

As stated earlier in the course of this writing as we delved through the socioeconomic backgrounds of the MB parliamentary bloc, it is rather apparent that the popular appeal that the MB MPs have on the street level is attributed to their close connectedness with their constituencies and their ability to voice out the needs and demands of the people of their respective districts.

The relationship between certain services/charity organizations, such as the JS, and the MB is evident. The main association is displayed in the operative cadres within such organizations. Most of the key-players in the JS are in fact MB members and affiliates, however since 1995 the state has realized this functional relationship and aimed at clamping down over the JS, shutting down some of its branches and imprisoning some of their cadres, accusing them of assisting in funding the banned group of the MB. Despite this repression, which has eventually affected the scheme of socioeconomic networking implemented by the MB, the latter was still capable of extending its web of services through the multitude of networks that are in synchronization with it.[312] Obviously, it was proven virtually impossible for the police to shut down or imprison the massive amount of formal and informal networks and the social workers associated with the MB.

[311] Interview with Hossam Tammam, editor of Islam Online, Cairo, August 3rd, 2008
[312] Ibid.

Out of all the ISIs, the JS sure stands out as it is comprised of over 10,000 mosques spread all over the country. In 1995, the state came very close to shutting the JS down due to its considerable influence and apparent relationship with the MB, nonetheless that did not take place due to the sizable apparatus that is possessed by the JS and the extremely negative impact that would have taken place on the street level had it been shut down. For the state, the JS is a timed social bomb that was awaiting detonation by the MB. Instead, severe attempts were made by the police apparatus to suppress the cadres that are involved with both entities; the MB and the JS, and the end-result was an implicit agreement with the leadership of the JS that there should be a humble separation between its activities and those of the MB,[313] but in reality, and as we have seen in this chapter, that separation was never achieved. Until today, the wide scope of services presented to the populace, via those 10,000 mosques or so, is synonymously provided to the people in the name of the MB.

At the core of the web of networks that is maintained by the MB comes the lesser notables; this category of sociopolitical actors that thrived in the aftermath of the 1974 *infitah* (Open Door) policies. The profile of those notables, being simply educated societal actors who are successful in infiltrating the communities in which they duel, thanks to the resources and networks in their possession, makes them the best candidates for the sort of social work and *da`wa* on which the JS and other ISIs depend in establishing and further consolidating their social base. Due to their sound interconnectedness and imbedded socioeconomic networks, particularly within the popular quarters of Cairo, those notables have a plethora of roles to fulfill in the contexts

[313] Ibid and Interviews with JS cadres, Misr Qadima, Cairo, June and July 2008

of formal/informal politics, state-society relations, mediation and conflict, generation and direction of resources and awareness and the reproduction of culture.

In some respects, the state is colonized by local notability and operates within the framework designed by the notables and their aides and associates. More often than not, the state is brought down to the stratum of the people, where it becomes a locale of everyday quarrels and disputes. Via their sound networks with public institutions and their position within the community, those lesser notables are often sought out by their clients to resolve disputes and provide them with a wide variety of services that the formal institutions of the state have failed to deliver.[314] As we have seen in the case of Misr Al Qadima, the Lesser Notables appear to be the winning card of political agency and there is an ongoing competition between the MB and the NDP when it comes to co-opting them. In Cairo's popular communities, the socioeconomic and political role of the lesser notability as influential societal actors is becoming increasingly noticeable. With the gradual withdrawal of the state from the everyday affairs of such populaces, lesser notabilities, in conjunction with other entities such as the ISIs, act sometimes as intermediaries with and viable alternatives to the official state-apparatuses. Thus, in the milieu of the popular quarters, the 'lesser' nature of these notabilities, that stand in opposition to the classical landowning notabilities and the rather modern and sometimes NDP-associated mega-business notabilities, is in fact changing due to their increasingly elevating stature within the popular polity. Hence, it could be argued that the lesser notability of Cairo's popular communities is gradually moving out of its 'lesser' status, and further to the forefront of the popular polity.

[314] Salwa Ismail (2006) *Political Life in Cairo's New Quarters*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p.47.

Unsurprisingly in 2007 the amalgam of those MB cadres that were arrested and accused of the charge of being the "financial arm" of the MB belonged to this category of lesser notability, including Khairat Al Shater, the deputy of the General Guide of the MB. By then it was made crystal-clear that the state-security apparatus of the regime has predominantly failed in containing the sizable influence of these sociopolitical agents and that it had to resort to oppressive mechanisms in order to attempt and limit their increasingly influential role within the Egyptian polity.

Chapter V: The National Democratic Party and the Lesser Notability in Misr Al Qadima

Introducing the NDP

The National Democratic Party (NDP), established by Former President Anwar Al Sadat as the majority party, succeeded the Arab Socialist Union (ASU), which was set by the Nasser regime in the 1960s in order to fulfill the role of the sole political forum of the state. But with the increasing emphasis upon the supposed theme of economic and political reform as the main national policy of the state throughout President Hosni Mubarak's rule, more particularly strengthened with Egypt's adoption of the Economic Reform and Structural Adjustment Program (ERSAP) in 1991, the party seems to be facing an existential threat that challenges the very same grounds upon which it was constituted. Some analysts argue that the existence of the NDP, an inheritor of the Nasserite mobilization instrument, the ASU, "contradicts regime rhetoric of open markets and political pluralization…The NDP's sole remaining important function is to hold together a loyal and massive majority in parliament through the distribution of patronage."[315] Yet the scheme of patronage channeled through the ranks of the NDP is not only limited to the echelons of the parliamentary elections. Regime cronies that formulate the backbone of President Hosni Mubarak's ruling clique since 1981 have been associated with a wide scope of irregularities that include financial corruption and exploitation of official posts to serve personal, familial and other clientelism purposes, mainly aiming at consolidating their positions within the NDP and the Egyptian polity at large even further.

[315] Abdul Aziz, Muhammad and Hussein, Youssef (2002) The President, the Son, and the Military: The Question of Succession in Egypt. *Arab Studies Journal*, Vol.9, No.2. p.83

With the ascent of President Mubarak's son, Gamal Mubarak, into the apex of the NDP in 2000, there seemed to be a tendency on the part of Gamal Mubarak and his aides to reformulate the foundations of the NDP, making it more suitable for the mindset and prospective policies of Gamal Mubarak and his reformist faction. Entering the higher stratum of the Egyptian polity, Gamal Mubarak had to comply with the rules of the game and acquire his own power-base within such a polity. In this case, best fit with Gamal Mubarak's persona and affiliations, the suggested powerbase was the newly flourishing business community of Egypt. This community is mainly comprised of prominent businessmen that were on the rise with Egypt's adoption of a more liberal economy, ultimately giving way to a new class of business-owners to take over as the prime playmakers in the NDP and, subsequently, in the Egyptian polity at large.

As a matter of fact, "the younger Mubarak filled the party's upper ranks with like-minded neo-liberals.[316] Dominated by western educated academics and entrepreneurs, this emerging team had until recently made slow headway against the entrenched…that clog in the arteries of both the party and the government."[317] Indeed names like Mahmoud Mohiey Eddin, minister of investment in Ahmed Nazif's 2004 cabinet and Anas Al Fiqi, minister of youth then media in the same cabinet, skyrocketed in the echelons of the party. Furthermore a sizeable structural modification took place, via which a newly established set of secretariats that orchestrate the work of the NDP were

[316] The term "neo-liberal" here refers to Gamal Mubarak and his team's conviction that trade liberalization, Foreign Direct Investment and open market economic mechanisms should formulate the framework of the economic policies of reform adopted by the state. This also coincides with the sort of economic thought championed by Egypt's current cabinet, headed by Ahmed Nazif since 2004. Oppositely, those NDP cadres that this study describes as the "old-guard" do not necessarily share unitary socioeconomic and political stances yet operate within an extensive web of patron-client networks that is linked to the key old-guard figures at the top of the NDP as shall be shown later.

[317] Official Portal of the NDP. Available: http://www.ndp.org.eg/aboutus/ en/aboutus_1.htm Web. 27 May. 2009

created; It seemed as if the organizational strata of the party were actually coming into shape. 17 different secretariat committees were instituted, most important of which is the Policies Committee spearheaded by Gamal Mubarak himself and virtually responsible for setting the framework of the main macro-level politico-economic policies adopted by the NDP since 2004.[318] By then, it was rather obvious that Gamal Mubarak is on his way to consolidate control over the party, with the Policies Committee empowered enough to be the most influential entity within the NDP.

As described by the Economist, Egypt's neo-NDP is in a nutshell a patronage machine. "A party that has governed for a quarter of a century would seem an unlikely instrument for change. But the National Democratic Party (NDP), the lumbering patronage machine that holds all but a few seats in Egypt's rubber-stamp parliament, has just embraced a platform of sweeping economic, political and social reform."[319] However this platform of reform is clearly questionable as the foundational basis of the party remain unaltered. Patronage politics exemplified in the favoritism and the cooption policies undertaken by the NDP still prevail as the ruling party's main strategy in acquiring new alliances that would constitute its prowess within the Egyptian polity.

In fact, the dependence of the party upon clientelist policies seems to be intensifying with the alliance in the making with Egypt's emerging business community. The dilemma in the case of the evolution of patronage networks that are mainly reliant on business-community clientelism resides in the fact that such a community offers, by nature, an extremely vivid playground for the exploitation of resources. By definition,

[318] Ibid.

[319]Surgery on Hardened Arteries (2003) Available. Online: http://www. economist.com/ display Story.cfm? story_id. Web. 19 Dec. 2006

bigger businesses mean more resources, and the scope of endowments bestowed upon the clients from the regime will be comparatively immense when compared, for instance, to a clientele of army officers or public officials, as was the case during the Nasser era.

As it stands today, the NDP is not a proper party with a clear platform and a unified strategy. When we refer to the "NDP", we have to understand that this so-called party is in fact a fragmented entity that is comprised of a diverse set of ideas, beliefs, and personnel that, more often than not, conflict and collide with each other. Since its establishment in 1976 as the party of the state, the NDP was, in essence, an extension of the single party state system that was in place ever since the 1952 revolution. There is no unified ideology that characterizes the party. Within its ranks, one can find the secularists and the religious, the leftists and the right wingers, the pro-American neoliberals and the anti-globalization socialists…etc. All of those coexist and operate within the ranks of the NDP on the various echelons of the party, which displays that there is no clear-cut political platform that is being adopted by the NDP. This is of course reflected on the typology of social basis that such a party depends upon for popular support and the kind of relationship that is established between the party and social base.[320] Logically, this relationship will not be based on the allegiance with the party platform or the support to the ideas and beliefs that the NDP champions. Conversely, such a relationship, which is

[320] Interviews with NDP cadres, Cairo, March-April, 2009. The official NDP discourse that is often displayed in public meetings and leading figures' announcements endorses the Economic Reform and Structural Adjustment Program (ERSAP), which aims at promoting open market politico-economic policies, encouraging the role of the private sector, and reducing the role of the state. However, when looking at the cadres associated with the NDP, and as displayed in Chapter IV in the case of Misr Al Qadima's lesser notabilities, the picture becomes quite heterogeneous. In addition to the heritage of Nasserite Pan-Arab Socialism that is still alive among a sizable number of the older generations within the high and middle ranks of the party, one finds that within the lower echelons, as seen in the example of lesser notabilities, promoting a façade of Islamism is also a happening reality among a wide variety of NDP cadres.

likely to exist between the NDP and various types of individuals and communities, is based upon material benefit and co-optation.[321]

Hence, the services and resources provided by the party to its elements have turned into a mechanism to co-opt some societal forces into the state structure. This cooptation is rather vivid in Cairo's low-income and popular quarters, where young men and women now join the NDP, not because they are convinced with the party line and strategies, but because they seek socioeconomic upward mobility; an elevation into the higher echelons of the society which is more likely to be attained if one is in the ranks of the NDP. Employment, health care, and a wide scope of state services are likely guaranteed for NDP members and affiliates.[322] This chapter aims at dissecting the chief features of the political profile of the NDP in Misr Al Qadima, venturing then into the role that the lesser notabilities play in liaison with the NDP in this popular district.

As illustrated in Figure 5.a, despite the fact that the Chairman is at the apex of the hierarchical structure of the NDP, most of the policy-making processes take place within the milieus of the Political Bureau, the General Secretariat, and the Policies Secretariat. According to Articles 3, 4 and 5 of the statute of the NDP:

[321] Interview with Hossam Tammam. Cairo, August 3rd, 2008.
[322] Ibid and interviews with NDP cadres, Misr Al Qadima, February-March 2009. Here, certain limitations indeed exist with regard to the scope of benefits that one is expected to reap as a result of his/her NDP membership. The higher the rank of the person within the hierarchy of the party, the more he/she will be expected to get in terms of resources and services, in accordance with the level of association that the person has with the leading figures in the NDP. For instance, the members of the Party Units (local offices) in the various neighborhoods are considered to be better connected to patronage resources stemming from the party and its affiliated personnel-usually MP's-than, say, the ordinary members of the party that might not have any direct relationship with the MP's. Subsequently, the members of the specialized local secretariats: Women's, Youth Secretariats…etc are considered better linked to the decision-making circles of the party than the members of the Party Units and so on.

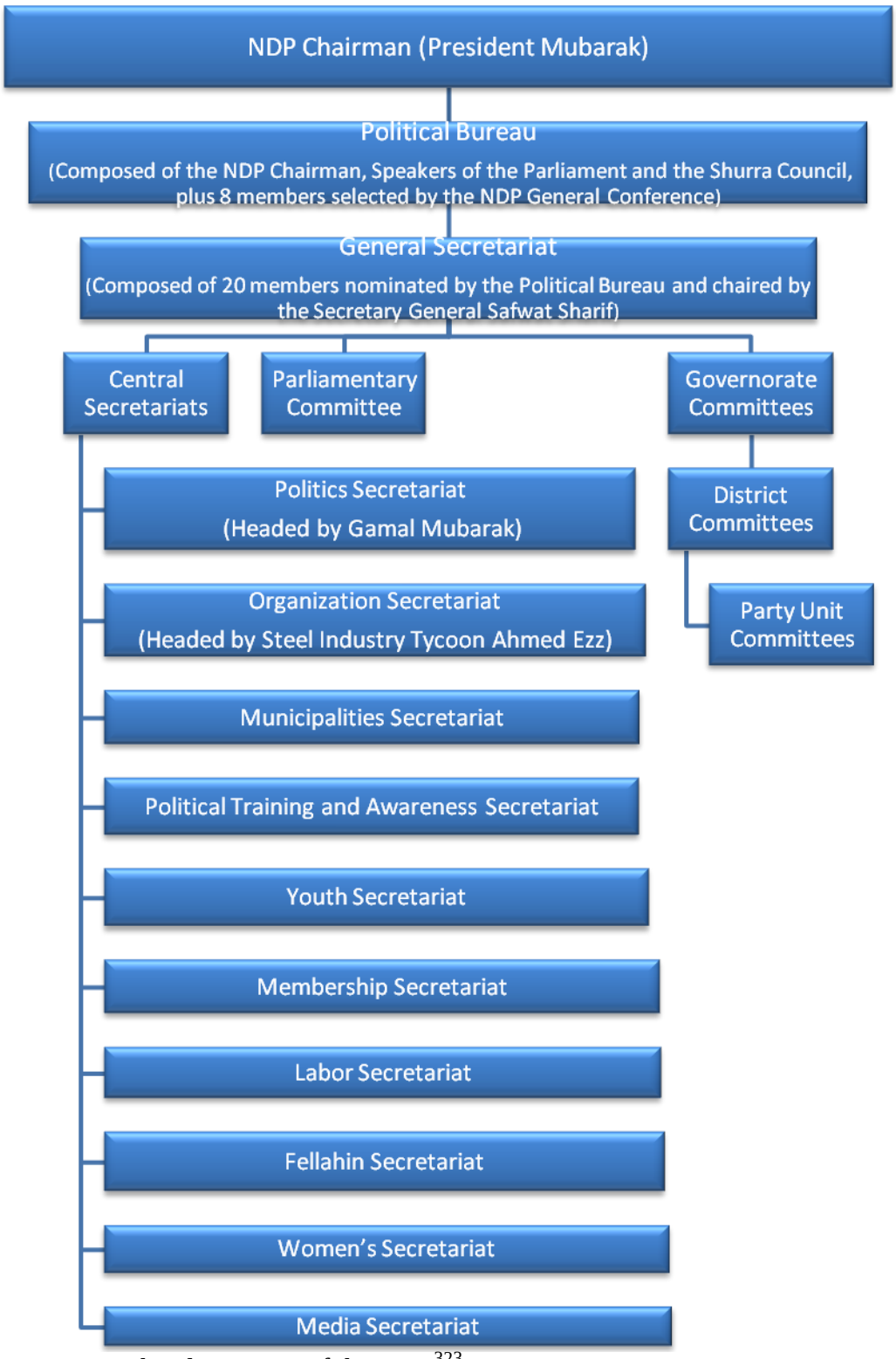

Illustration 5.a: Hierarchical structure of the NDP[323]

[323] Source: Official Portal of the NDP. Available at: http://www.ndp.org.eg/ar/Aboutus/2.aspx Web. 27 May. 2009

> The party's General Secretariat draws up the necessary rules for putting this Party structure into action. These principles become functional immediately after the Party's Chairman endorses them...At the same time, the General Secretariat designs the organizational structure of the party including responsibilities, status and mandates of the various party units...The organizational structure of the party consists of the following levels from bottom to top: 1-Party Unit level, 2-District Unit, 3- Central level and this consists of the General Secretariat and the Political Bureau. The Party Unit Committee is in charge of the affairs of the various units. Each of the committees at the various governorates and districts is responsible for party affairs in its realm of mandate. The General Secretariat and the Political Bureau are responsible for the central level.[324]

Within the aforementioned organizational levels -the central, district and party unit levels- the role of Gamal Mubarak is quite influential particularly on the central and to a lesser extent on the district level, by virtue of being the chairman of the Policies Secretariat, the entity that is now responsible for outlining the main political and economic policies that are to be adopted by the party and the central government. Arguably, one of the main features that characterize the organizational structure of the party today is the power-balance that exists between Gamal Mubarak and Safwat Sharif, an old-guard of the Mubarak regime and the current Secretary General of the party whose influence is, on aggregate, more dominant over the district and Party Unit levels. This is primarily attributed to the sizable scope of networks of political patronage that Sharif and other old-guard affiliated figures, such as Kamal Al Shazly and Zakaria Azmy, have established and consolidated over the years.[325]

[324] Official Portal of the NDP; Available at: http://www.ndp.org.eg/ar/Aboutus/2.aspx. Web. 27 May. 2009

[325] Interviews with Misr Al Qadima NDP cadres, Cairo, March 2009 and the NDP's Official Website, available at: http://www.ndp.org.eg/ aboutus/ en/aboutus_1.htm. Safwat Sharif is the general secretary of the NDP and speaker of *Shura* Council. He stayed in his position as minister of information for over 23 years until he was sacked and removed to be the speaker of *Shura* Council in 2004. His role is currently to coordinate between the opposition and the regime. His post as speaker of *Shura* Council allows him to broker deals with newly established opposition parties and newspapers in order to admit them into operation. Kamal Shazly is the assistant secretary general of the NDP. His close adherence to President Hosni Mubarak started in 1993 when appointed as minister for parliamentary and *Shura* Council affairs

In the upcoming section and throughout the remainder of this chapter, the research would argue that, particularly with the ascent of Gamal Mubarak into the higher echelons of the NDP since 2001 or so, there have been some significant changes in the strategies and, subsequently, policies adopted by the party. Importantly, and as portrayed in the relatively recent emphasis on consolidating the grip of the NDP over the municipalities, a realization of the continuing deterioration of the popularity of the NDP on the level of the social bases seems to be well in place among Gamal Mubarak and his like-minded NDP associates. As shall be portrayed in the course of this chapter, for these new-guard NDP cadres there appears to be a conviction that one of the chief remedies for this lack of presence on the popular level could take place via the consolidation of the local MCs. Again, as shall be displayed in this chapter, despite the willingness of the new-guard to spread the influence of the NDP to the municipalities, it is the wide array of patron-client networks that are possessed and further orchestrated by the old-guard that would largely enable the NDP to actualize this objective.

The rising importance of the Municipal Councils on the agenda of the NDP[326]

The NDP has been involved with a set of contradicting trends and policies with regard to the decentralization of local governance and the subsequent role played by local Municipal Councils in this process. A realization of the importance of the role that could

after the assassination of previous Speaker of Parliament Rifa'at Al Mahjoub. He plays an immense role in orchestrating the parliament and manipulating municipal and parliamentary elections. With sizeable networks with the security apparatus, Shazly acquires a multitude of "classified" files on parliamentary as well as other governmental personnel. Zakaria Azmy is the secretary of the Administrative and Financial Affairs of the NDP. He is one of President Hosni Mubarak's closest aides, mainly due to his occupation as the head officer of the President (*rai's al diwan*). He plays an essential role in the parliament as the devil's advocate of the government, voicing out the opinion of the opposition. This gave him a sense of appeal within the parliament and served his ambition well concerning the elevation into the post of speaker of parliament Ahmed Fathi Sorrour, the current holder of the post.

[326] See Chapter I, pages 23-24, for an overview of the history and current status of the MCs.

be played by the municipalities in counteracting the popular appeal and services provided by the ISIs has arguably led the NDP to invest further in these institutions of local governance. Yet the main objective has not been to empower these local municipalities and turn them into meaningful actors on the community level but, rather, to co-opt them and ensure their loyalty to the central authority, in order to be utilized as a community-level powerbases in the face of the rising ISIs.[327]

As a matter of fact, local administrative units in Egypt are, in practice, extensions of the executive authority. The central government makes the decisions and policies and imposes them. In addition to this, it directs the activities of the administrative system, which implements the policy[328]. Overall, local governance is characterized with weak participation of citizens due to the dilemma of the political party system which includes a hegemonic role of the NDP and the presence of weak opposition parties and an electoral system that is tainted with a relatively high degree of irregularities and governing-regime manipulation. This of course weakens popular participation in municipal elections due to the decreasing trust in the fairness of elections, the prevalence of illiteracy and the widespread phenomenon of family and tribal votes. Logically, without participation from the bottom up, local governments are incapable of accurately structuring or administering public services. Popular participation is indeed necessary if accountability within local institutions and responsiveness to the community's needs are to be created.

Local financial and fiscal decentralization is also quite limited. By and large, the local MCs suffer from the scarcity of self-funding, and a weak role in managing their budgets, as the majority of their financial resources comes from the central government in

[327] Interview with Omar Abdalla, administrator of Egypt Decentralization Initiative, Cairo, December, 2007
[328] Hassan Abo Talib. The Wanted Decentralization and Participation. *Al Ahram*, December 5th 2007

the form of subsidies. Therefore, the sub-national government bodies in Egypt have relatively little fiscal autonomy. All governorate, district, and municipal budgets are part of the central budget approved by the legislature. Transfer of funds from the central government accounts for almost 90 percent of local revenues. Local governments raise funds through urban real estate, agricultural land, motor vehicle registration, and licensing. Most regional and local funds are allocated to existing expenditures, such as salaries and debt management. The absence of capital at the local level undermines the ability of these governments to initiate developmental projects of any kind in their own localities. Overall, without control over their own revenues and budgets, local governments cannot operate autonomously.[329]

Nevertheless, and despite the aforementioned features of local governance in Egypt, the political discourse of President Hosni Mubarak stressed on decentralization since November 2003.[330] This in fact seemed to be well in synchronization with the objectives of the neoliberal schemes of reform adopted by the WB and the IMF, under which the scheme of decentralization of local governance plays a paramount role in loosening the grip of the state over the localities, reducing its size and budget along the process. But, in practice, what the Mubarak regime did since then, spearheaded by the NDP, was not more than lip-service to this discourse of decentralization. What the NDP, backed up by the security apparatus, has done, instead, was to ensure that these MCs are filled with NDP loyalists who are keen on enhancing the stature of the ruling party in their own localities at the expense of other contesting political forces, such as the MB and its affiliated ISIs.

[329] Interview with Omar Abdalla, administrator of Egypt Decentralization Initiative, Cairo, December, 2007

[330] The Economic and Social Development Plan 2005-2006, Ministry of Planning, , p.152

In the period from 2003-2007 the municipal elections were frozen by presidential decree and, instead, throughout this period the government appointed ad-hoc committees, comprised mainly of NDP members and affiliates of course, in order to run the affairs of the municipalities. The result was a scope of stagnant and predominantly inefficient MCs that, by and large, failed in fulfilling their commitments as executive branches of local governance.[331] As shall be displayed below in the case of Misr Al Qadima, the most recent 2008 municipalities' elections have, consequently, witnessed a considerable degree of state intervention that was aimed at securing the bulk of MC seats to NDP loyalists. In short, it is rather safe to argue that, with the ascent of Egypt's neoliberal phase, the Mubarak regime seemed adamant on making the municipalities more effective, and that such a process was orchestrated in a manner that secures that these entities of local governance are to serve the best interests of the regime and its subordinate NDP.[332]

The relationship between the NDP/state institutions and the NGOs

Another facet that has also shaped the socioeconomic/political policies adopted by the NDP and its government regarding the popular communities is the incrementally growing role of the NGOs in the popular polity, which seems to be coinciding with the NDP's discourse of neoliberalism, championed by the new guard-orientated Policies Committee. This discourse stresses on a bigger role for the private sector and the civil society and a reduction in the role of the state in managing and administering the

[331] Interview with Omar Abdalla, administrator of Egypt Decentralization Initiative, Cairo, December, 2007

[332] Ever since its ascent into power in 2004, Ahmed Nazif's cabinet (central government) has stressed that it represents the government of the party and not vice versa .i.e. it is a government that is mandated with a certain economic and political program that was set in accordance with the agenda of the NDP. This central government (2004-present) is primarily comprised of cadres that could be considered as close associates to Gamal Mubarak as well as being strong advocates of the predominantly neo-liberal reform vision that he champions.

socioeconomic affairs of the society. In the NDP's most recent party platform drafted by the Policies Committee in 2005, there was a clear emphasis on the important role of the NGOs in aiding the state in confronting the socioeconomic hardships of the community. "Voluntary social work is an effective means for achieving more progress for society in its capacity as a real prop to the role the government plays. It is crystal clear that governments alone can not satisfy all the needs of their citizens. Neither can the governments solve all the problems society faces alone"[333].

However, this recent rise in the scope and magnitude of the activities of the NGOs in the milieu of the popular communities was also associated with attempts to utilize this phenomenon in serving the interests of the NDP cadres in the popular polity. As will be displayed in the course of this chapter, different categories of sociopolitical actors, including some lesser notabilities associated with the NDP as well as NDP patrons and elitist notabilities operating within the popular echelons of the community, have all attempted to establish and consolidate their control over various NGOs. Quite often, the aim of the NDP patron/cadre is to orchestrate a process of channeling a wide variety of resources and services to the populace in the name of the political cadre him/herself and the party. Henceforth, there is a sense of competition between various NGOs over the arena of providing services to the populace, however not for charitable but, rather, political purposes. As will be shown in the cases of Mamdouk Mekky, Iman Bibars, and, to a lesser extent, the female lesser notable, Hannan Al Sa`idi, various NDP figures were all in charge of a set of NGOs that were either self-funded or dependent upon donations and financial support from the state, as well as a plethora of development donors. As attested by most of these cadres, the NGO has been quite often utilized by the NDP figure

[333] Official Portal of the NDP; Available at: http://www.ndp.org.eg/ar/Aboutus/2.aspx Web. 28 Jun. 2009

that controls it for personal benefit, in order to raise his/her sociopolitical profile in the political constituency in which he/she operates.

The NDP in Misr Al Qadima

The geopolitics and history of Misr Al Qadima have played a great role in shaping the stature of the NDP in this popular quarter, as it has been the case with the MB, illustrated in the previous chapter. In Misr Al Qadima proper (the old quarter), the NDP's arrival into the political scene of the area coincided, more or less, with the construction of the newer quarters of `Ain Al Sirra in the 1960s. At that time, the ASU, the predecessor of the NDP, was introduced to the area as the mobilizing engine of political action and, subsequently, sizable numbers of young people joined the ranks of the ASU then, seeking the actualization of the proclaimed objectives of the ASU: national independence, social justice, and pan-Arab cooperation and development. The ASU, which was by and large synonymous with the state, represented itself as the guarantor of services and subsidies to the people, and it maintained a considerable degree of popularity in the district, especially in `Ain Al Sirra, the part of Misr Al Qadima that was originally constructed by the Nasser regime to provide housing to the low-income segments of the society.[334]

With the ascent of Sadat and his open door policies in the early 1970s, the stature of the state-sponsored ASU declined gradually all over the country, until it was ultimately dissolved by Sadat in 1972. Eventually, the vacuum left by the ASU was loosely filled with the NDP, established in 1976 as the political party representing the state. The party had a somehow vague platform that was described by the regime then as a "centrist"

[334] Ahmed Abdallah and Ahmed Siam (1996). *Al Mosharaka Al Sha'beya Fi Hay Ain Al Sira Bel Qahera*. Cairo: Al Jeel Center.

ideology, generically calling for national unity, economic development, and political stability. The mobilization machine and relative popularity that were previously maintained by the ASU were not at all inherited by the NDP, especially within the popular quarters where the state has withdrawn from its welfare services and subsidies, as shown prior in Chapter III and IV. Instead, the NDP focused most of its activities in the realm of elections, functioning as the chief vote gatherer for the candidates representing the state-party in the parliamentary and municipal elections.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the role of the NDP as a vote securer was rather solidified. In Misr Al Qadima, a district (*shiyakha*) office was established along with a plethora of smaller offices (party units) around the various sub-neighborhoods of the area. The *shiyakha* office was the leading party organization in the area, supposedly operating as the intermediary linkage between the higher echelons of the NDP and its grassroots basis on the lower strata of the Misr Al Qadima polity. Under its auspices came the smaller party units, which acted as the venues for recruiting new party cadres that would presumably disseminate the resources and services to the populace, maintaining the allegiance of these popular social bases to the party, particularly during election time. However, and as was the case with a multitude of low-income and popular quarters, the 1980s and 1990s also witnessed an enormous rise in the scope and magnitude of services provided by the ISIs of Misr Al Qadima, which in turn led to a sharp rise in the popularity of the Islamists in the area, particularly the MB. The waning popularity of the NDP in Misr Al Qadima was rather apparent with the 2000 and 2005

parliamentary elections, where the four seats of the parliament were equally distributed between NDP and MB affiliates.[335]

In fact, the results of the 2005 parliamentary elections were virtually shocking for the NDP, as the MB succeeded in becoming the most sizable opposition force in parliament with 88 seats (out of 444) despite the harsh oppression and intimidation exercised against its candidates by the police apparatus all over the country. This was the ruling party's biggest parliamentarian defeat to date and, with that, it seemed as if the NDP had finally realized that the immense retreat in its stature was so grave that it required some fundamental alterations in the strategies and policies implemented by the party on the ground:

> I have been in the party for over 15 years now and I can sense the change taking place. There are some attempts towards introducing more transparency and democratization, like preliminary elections to determine the party candidates in the parliamentarian and local council elections…etc. The dichotomy still exists however between the old and the new generations, with this new-guard faction spearheaded by Gamal Mubarak and the Policies Committee he chairs. The divide between the old-guard and the new is, in my opinion, similar to a standoff between the traditional/corrupt and the young/enthused….etc. A few NDP members are now aware of the importance of addressing the needs of the lower level/popular level constituencies…Yet those remain to be a minority, and the majority could still be considered as the old-guard who are pretty much more interested in consolidating the domination of the NDP over popular politics, perhaps, among other factors, due to the traditional vision that is widespread among these cadres regarding the unimportance of transparency or democracy, unless utilized in the best interest of the ruling party.[336]

One of the chief cornerstones of the reformed NDP policies that were encouraged by the new-guards of the party was how it viewed and attempted to utilize local municipalities

[335] Ibid and interviews with Mahmoud Al Khashab and Khaled Abdelfattah, chair and member of the Misr Al Qadima Local Council, July 3rd, 2008
[336] Interviews with Hannan Al Sai'di, Cairo, March-April 2008

in raising the sociopolitical profile of the party and its incumbents in the popular and rural quarters.

NDP: Detachment with the popular powerbases and attempts of reform

Indeed there is an increasing degree of detachment between the NDP and the street level powerbases. This lack of popularity on the street level is one of the main reasons that made the 2005 parliamentary elections witness the worst results for the NDP to date:

> The NDP suffers from a lack of popularity on the street level when compared to the MB. Most of the candidates nominated by the NDP in the 2005 elections lost, and if it weren't for the 'independent' candidates joining the ranks of the party after the elections, the NDP wouldn't have enjoyed a majority in the parliament today. In fact in 2005 I presented a paper to the Policies Committee arguing that the lack of a meaningful scheme of services to the people is bringing the party down to the drain…Now the party is realizing the importance of spreading the scheme of its social services in the popular quarters…Ahmed Ezz, secretary [of organization] of the NDP, has specified over a 100,000 LE for every MP to provide services to his constituency.[337]

Perhaps the abovementioned 100,000 LE (almost equivalent to 20,000 $US by 2008 exchange rates) is an indicator of the increasing attention that is given by the decision-making circles in the party with regard to the consolidation of popular powerbases. Despite the fact that only 100,000 LE is probably insufficient to fund for the needed social services in a single popular quarter, yet it could constitute an important contribution to this end and a sum that could be utilized in providing small-medium sized benefits to a good number of people in a popular locale.[338]

[337] Interview with Iman Bibars, June 5th, 2008

[338] For instance, by 2008 prices, this amount of money could, more or less, provide over 500 medium-sized households (five people) with their daily needs of semi-subsidized basic goods (bread, butter, oil, sugar, rice…etc) for nearly six months.

Overall, there have been a lot of voices within the NDP that urged the party to alter its tendency to implement certain policies regardless of their practical implications and effect on the people on the ground. The NDP seems to be realizing this gap now, and the Policies Committee is increasingly turning into a think-tank that tries to deal with the issues that involve the popular classes rather practically.[339] In fact, The NDP's new guard faction represented by the Policies Committee is attempting to deal with this dilemma of lack of grassroots basis and there have been some initiatives that aim at reforming the party by putting it in touch with the popular echelons. In addition to the fact that the party now puts more emphasis over the MCs and the elections pertaining, some alteration in the tactics undertaken by the party in dealing with the popular constituencies is also taking place. For instance, the party units (local NDP bureaus) used to be dominated by the loyalists that were usually instated in their positions by their patron NDP MPs and MC members, regardless of their popularity or actual influence and ability to provide services to the people of their districts. Those loyalists, typically the electoral campaign facilitators and the relatives of the successful candidates, ended up being the local NDP bureau secretaries of the various committees and their respective posts had nothing to do with their areas of expertise or their capacity to serve in those committees.[340]

Thus, there exists a divide between the higher ranks of the NDP and the lower echelons that supposedly connect with the popular constituencies. This is a major dilemma and now the NDP seems to be realizing that this gap exists. "Now the NDP is quite aware that it can not afford not having a proper party and popular constituency and if we look at the 2005 party unit elections and the 2007 local council elections, we will

[339] Interview with Iman Bibars, June 5th, 2008
[340] Interview with Hisham Khalil, NDP member and MP, Cairo, July 2008

find that now a lot of the cadres occupying the leading positions within the party units are not the loyalists anymore."[341] Furthermore, the party started designing and implementing political training and awareness programs, targeting the members of the local units and aiming at enhancing their political knowledge along with their interpersonal skills in order to enable them to deal with the populace as professional politicians. These steps were essential to separate the party from the cohorts of the MPs and the MC members and enable it to stand on its own as a sovereign entity that is not easily affected by the support of one person or another.[342] However, the impact of these reforms is yet to be assessed. As shall be shown later in the course of this chapter, despite the emphasis that was put forward by the NDP on the MCs and the elections pertaining, the fact remains that those that were pivoted in the MCs and the party units depended on the alliances and networks of the old-guard of the NDP. As will be stated later, the old-guard, that seems to be quite wary of the reforms that are being introduced by Gamal Mubarak and his new-guard cohorts, is still more capable of dealing with the intricate details of the popular communities than the new-guard.

The NDP and the MC of Misr Al Qadima: Notabilities within the state

Picture 5.a: The Complex hosting the MC of Misr Al Qadima

[341] Interview with Iman Bibars, June 5th, 2008

[342] Ibid

Picture 5.b: The Entrance to the MC and The various sub-divisions of offices inside

The local MC of Misr Al Qadima lies on Salah Salem Road, almost at the junction between `Ain Al Sirra and the older quarter of Misr Al Qadima. As shown in the picture, the moderately constructed building that hosts the council is also home to a variety of other state administrative units pertaining to the area. Upon arriving in the MC, which occupied an entire floor in this four-story building, the researcher was met with a warm welcome from a person who introduced himself as the Chair of the Local Council. That was Mahmoud Al Khashab; a cheerful and helpful man who was apparently willing to present a picture of the activities of the MC. Another member in the Council, Khaled Abdelfattah, joined the discussion, only to reveal some insightful and in-depth details about the sociopolitical realities of Misr Al Qadima.[343]

The profiles of the Misr Al Qadima MC members are in fact quite diverse. The majority of the members come from two main categories; they are either business-owners

[343] Interviews with Mahmoud Al Khashab and Khaled Abdelfattah, chair and member of the Misr Al Qadima Local Council, July 3rd, 2008

or merchants like Abdelfattah himself, or state employees, just as Al Khashab, the chairperson of the MC. The 22 MC members are almost divided equally between these two categories. Abdelfattah, the MC member, was more involved in and aware of the daily affairs of the area than Al Khashab, the actual chair of the council. These two newly elected MC members come from two considerably different backgrounds. Al Khashab is an accountant and a state employee at the Ministry of Social Affairs and he is only available in the MC on part-time basis. The other, Abdelfattah, is a prominent Misr Al Qadima leather merchant and a notable of the area. He has only earned a primary education certificate and his political profile includes a zealous membership of the NDP which has lasted for over two decades, and a prime position in the party as the secretary of the *shiyakha* (district), following the footsteps of his late father.[344]

Abdelfattah has embarked upon a wide scope of social and political activities since a very young age. In a sense, he has inherited his father's role, not only as the leading leather tannery manufacturer and merchant of the area, but also as a leading figure in the ranks of the NDP and the MC. In addition, he also pursued his line as the board member of the Commercial Chamber of Skin Tannery. "My father had an excellent repute as someone who provides services to the people of his area and there was a certain responsibility that I had to continue in his footsteps, in order not let down those that depended on him as the facilitator with the state authorities".[345] The demise of Abdelfattah's father almost coincided with the new wave of reform that was spearheaded by Gamal Mubarak and, subsequently, he had to go through the internal elections of the party to win the nomination for the MC elections, which he did. Eventually, he won a

[344] Ibid

[345] Ibid

seat in the MC and also made it through in the local NDP elections undertaken in the same year (2006), resulting in him winning the seat of the secretary of the district (*shiyakha*) of the party.

Although some of the secretaries of the NDP districts prefer not to occupy a position in the MC, as they consider the tasks expected from the person occupying these two positions to be somehow burdensome, there was a certain rationale for Abdelfattah occupying these two seats:

> I think that in order for someone like me to be able to serve the people of his area proper, he has to be in as many posts as possible. This gives one a versatile window of opportunity, through which you can serve the people in a multiplicity of ways. For example, being in the Board of the Commercial Chamber has enabled me to provide a lot of services for the skin tannery and leather laborers, business owners, and merchants, who constitute a sizable portion of the population of our area. After all, in order to be efficient and helpful to the people of such an area, I have to be in the MC. The Local Council lies at the core of any scope of services that could be supplied. Infrastructure works, electricity, sanitation, building permits…etc., are among the mandates of the municipalities, and these are crucial services that are indispensible to the people of the area.[346]

In fact, now with the relatively recent emphasis that is put by the party on the municipalities and the essentiality of their role in leading the process of socioeconomic development,[347] especially in the popular areas, the importance of the role of the municipalities has arguably surpassed that of the legislative councils, i.e. the parliament and the Shura Council. "Indeed those at the municipality are responsible for getting

[346] Ibid.

[347]What is being referred to as the process of socioeconomic development relates to President Hosni Mubarak's Presidential Program which is supposed to be implemented by the relevant central and local government entities. This Program was critiqued for being unsuccessful due to its failure in addressing major developmental issues of poverty alleviation, income distribution, and corruption on the level of the central/local governments, among others. Enhancing decentralization and empowering the MCs is supposed to be one of the main constituents of President Hosni Mubarak's 2005 Program.

things done for the people on the ground. That's why when an MP is willing to provide a certain service to the people of his district; he has to go through the municipality first."[348]

Here, the importance of the NDP, cited by Abdelfattah, relates to the administrative role that the municipalities play and how essential that is for undertaking all the necessary constructional and infrastructural works within the municipality, for example. Because of this very same administrative role that is played by the MCs, it appears that the NDP is now considering the MCs as a potential foothold against other political forces, which could make the municipalities more important than other state institutions, such as the parliament, for the purpose of consolidating the influence of the NDP on the popular level.

The MCs: A strong foothold for the NDP versus other political forces?

On the local level, it is the municipalities that do most of the work pertaining to executing the policies of the NDP, according to Jamilla Abdelmajid, the Misr Al Qadima MC member. MC members are directed by the NDP on the policy level and, accordingly, these members take care of things on the executive level. As opposed to other political forces, other than the MB, the NDP could be considered as the political force which is capable of achieving some actual changes on the ground in the popular communities. "Health and educational services are primarily provided by the NDP and its subsequent members. Now with the new wave of NDP reform and increasing financial and

[348] Interview with Omar Abdalla, administrator of Egypt Decentralization Initiative, Cairo, December, 2007

authoritative empowerment of the MCs, other political parties, including the MB, will be incapable of keeping up with us."[349]

Perhaps the main realm in which the NDP can easily overcome any competition is constructing new facilities. Due to the need to obtain permits from relevant state authorities and ministries, mandatory for any new constructions to be erected, the NDP and its affiliated members can proceed in this arena with relative ease compared to other political forces, especially the Islamist ones. Throughout the past few years alone, in `Ain Al Sirra, and to a lesser extent also in the old Misr Al Qadima quarter, the local party unit under the auspices of several NDP notabilities in the area has actually constructed new co-ops, medical daycare centers and two new schools, in accordance with the developmental needs of the area.[350] For NDP members and affiliates like Abdelmajid, these activities reflect the responsiveness of the NDP concerning the needs of the people of the area. However, for most of the locals of Misr Al Qadima, these relatively recent NDP-sponsored services constitute only a portion of the needs of the area and, as displayed in various sections of this study, the gap that is left with regard to the NDP-provided services remains to be huge.[351]

Importantly, the aforementioned reveals that the MCs indeed constitute potential powerhouses for the exploitation of the executive/administrative powers that are in the hands of MC members. As they monopolize the issuance of construction and other

[349] Interview with Jamilla Abdelmajid, April 2008

[350] Ibid

[351] Interviews with Misr Al Qadima locals, January-June 2008; the examples of the state's incapability to suffice for the basic needs of the people of a popular community such as that of Misr Al Qadima vary, and they range from the severe shortage in the supply of basic goods as manifested in the bread crisis, outlined in Chapter IV, to the inadequacy of health, education, and infrastructural services expressed by the majority of the Misr Al Qadima locals that the researcher has met.

permits, MC members and other local NDP officials and politicians are often engaged in rent-seeking activities that aim at gaining personal benefit – usually a certain sum of money – in return for the permit or the authorization that is granted by the MC with the help of the MC member or NDP official. It is not uncommon to find that in Misr Al Qadima, and in most other urban locales in Cairo, there is a certain price for such permits and that these prices vary according to the socioeconomic status of the neighborhood and the nature of the permit needed. For example, permits in the more affluent areas of Cairo are likely to cost more than they do in the popular areas. Also, the building permit for constructing an entirely new building will typically cost more than the one needed for adding an extra floor to an already-existing building, for instance. Of course, the NDP cadres associated with the MC would refuse to acknowledge that such irregularities exist, however a multitude of these cases have been reported in Misr Al Qadima and in other districts all over Cairo prior. "Undoubtedly the MCs have been tainted with cases of corruption that would mainly involve the MC member facilitating the authorization of a building permit or a commercial license for a certain price. These prices are well-known to the locals of an area like Misr Al Qadima. For example, it would cost almost 10,000 L.E to issue a permit for a new building."[352]

The abovementioned also asserts that it is virtually impossible to draw the line between the jurisdictions and roles of the party and those of the state/central government. Hence, the distinction between the two becomes quite difficult, especially for the

[352] Ibid and Al Masry Al Yom, Vol. 6, Issue 2016, December 20th 2009; the pricing of MC permits is so common to the extent that the state itself has admitted that this phenomenon is a happening reality. Zakaria Azmi, the chief of staff of the President's Office was famously quoted in the parliament in 2007 saying that "Corruption in the municipalities has reached unprecedented degrees".

majority of the people on the street, and, eventually, the NDP becomes synonymous to the state.

> This expansion in social services on the popular level is in the electoral program of President Mubarak…These priorities are set on the budget of the local councils and the relevant ministries, such as the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Construction for example. Local council members are responsible for ensuring the allocation of land designated for building new schools, for instance, and some lobbying is needed within these ministries also to facilitate and speed up the bureaucratic procedural processes within such government entities in order to obtain building permits, secure approvals for financial allocations, and such.[353]

This congruency between the NDP and the state apparatuses is in the benefit of the NDP and its personnel, as it reinforces the conviction that, in order for the people to benefit from the resources and services provided by the state, they have to ally themselves with the NDP.

Abdelfattah reckons that there is a multitude of services that he has helped provide to the people of the area, utilizing his position/s in these entities, primarily the party and the MC. According to Abdelfattah, he is adamant on providing anything that he could do to serve the people of the constituency. In addition to the basic services that are typically provided by the MC, other services were also created to help levy some of the socioeconomic predicaments faced by the people of the area. For instance, he initiated an employment campaign whereby young people with relatively limited skills and education could apply for work and then, acting as a facilitator, he would utilize his networks within the party and the chamber to find them opportunities for trainings and apprenticeships and then fixed-term jobs, mostly as laborers in leather and other factories. His work in conjunction with other NGOs in the skin tannery workshops' relocation crisis was also of great benefit to the people of the area, he believes. The MC of Misr Al

[353] Interview with Jamilla Abdelmajid, April 2008

Qadima did its best concerning the skin tannery workshops relocation, in order to assist the locals of the area. First, the municipality succeeded in voicing out a lot of concerns to the government, for there was a lot of hype and social refusal that was associated with the decision to relocate the workshops. "A variety of NGOs and other social organizations fought to resist the decree or, at least, get the best terms possible for such a move and I think these forces combined succeeded in halting the transfer, to date, and until further scrutiny and studying is made to ensure that the interests of the skin tannery community are not affected."[354]

The state has frozen the municipalities across the country for over four years before deciding to bring them back to life and reemphasize their role in 2007. The initial freezing and then the decision to reactivate the municipalities again at that point was justified by Abdelfattah in the light of a set of new policies that the NDP is now adopting in the realm of "popular participation" as he put it. "Constitutionally, the municipalities could not have been frozen further. When the time of the MC elections came in 2007, the realization of the state and the NDP that the best venue for infiltrating through to the popular communities can only be actualized in the municipalities was crystallized, especially with the rise of the various Islamist forces that have succeeded in providing a

[354] Interviews with Mahmoud Al Khashab and Khaled Abdelfattah, chair and member of the Misr Al Qadima Local Council, July 3rd, 2008. Look also Al Sai'di and Bibars on the same issue of relocation of skin tannery workshops, pages 224 and 238-239. The crisis of the relocation of the skin tannery workshops is elaborated upon further in the course of the section on the NGOs of the area and their relationship with the NDP. Since 2005, the state has been adamant on relocating the workshops of skin tannery, the chief economic activity of sizable bulk of Misr Al Qadima residents, to poorly prepared sites on the desert outskirts of Cairo, tens of miles away from where they are originally located. This government plan was met with robust opposition from various societal actors, in addition to the owners and workers of these workshops themselves, who perceived this government plan as a mere uprooting from the locale of this industry, which does not provide them with proper alternatives or compensation. The newly suggested sites were described as ill-prepared and unfit for the relocation of the skin tannery workshops, in addition to the fact that they were quite remote from where the owners and laborers of this industry have lived and worked for decades.

wide array of services in the popular areas in particular."[355] There were no alternative outlets that could offset or at least compete with the social networks of the Islamists, other than the municipalities. Recently, with the advent of the municipalities' reactivation, the party has been increasingly involved in a wide of variety of trainings and workshops targeting the various MC members of the NDP. Also, now there are regular, usually monthly, meetings on the level of the entire governorate of Cairo with the leadership of the party, primarily with Gamal Mubarak and the rest of the politburo, aiming at raising the awareness of the MC members and acquainting them with the goals and objectives of the NDP at various points in time.

As asserted by Abdelfattah, there are some clear-cut obstacles that hinder the municipalities from actualizing their role. Despite the recent boost, a lot could be still done by the state to further empower the municipalities. More financial resources and a sounder autonomy in management of their own affairs are indeed needed, if these entities are to meet the requirements of their huge mandates. "The new law which is being currently drafted will also help enhance the prospects of the MC by granting it financial autonomy via a separate budget that is independent of that of the governorate".[356] This will arguably help improve the quality of services provided and ensure the swiftness of the decisions taken by the MC, as it will have the financial capacity to implement its executive mandates, regardless of the pending approval of the higher administrative entities. However, thus far, the government seems to be quite reluctant regarding this

[355] Ibid.

[356]Ibid; the new law referred to here is the new municipalities' law that was being drafted at the parliament. According to the newly suggested law, more financial autonomy and, generally, a wider scope of jurisdictions shall be granted to the MCs. However, the government was quite cautious that the law does not pass in the milieu of the parliament-It still has not until 2009-before ensuring that incumbent NDP loyalists and affiliates are instated in the leading authoritative positions in the municipalities, which was largely actualized in the 2007 municipal elections.

empowerment, preferring to strengthen the MCs insofar as they fulfill the role prescribed to them as subordinate bodies working under the jurisdiction of the NDP.

The 2008 MC Elections

It is rather important to signal that what is probably viewed by Abdelfattah and other NDP members and cadres as an attempt towards empowering the MCs, could be very well perceived also as an attempt to consolidate the hegemony of the party over these local governing councils. A good case for the NDP's willingness to consolidate its grip over the MCs could be displayed in the 2007/2008 municipal elections. Abdelfattah thinks that, despite the appearance of some irregularities in these past MC elections, on aggregate, the atmosphere of the elections and the accompanying activities of the candidates were rather positive features of the interconnectedness of these candidates with their polities. Nevertheless, this viewpoint is not shared by all NDP affiliates in Misr Al Qadima. For Hannan Al Sa`idi,[357] a prominent Misr Al Qadima NDP cadre, the 2008 MC elections was a big failure for the NDP. "I resigned from the Women's Committee, protesting the atrocities of these elections. The irregularities started from the time of registration of the candidates for the elections. Potential candidates wanting to register for the elections were faced by harsh interrogations from State Security agents in the government offices pertaining, and were consequently deterred from running for the elections".[358] Although it was initially said that such a move was aimed against the MB

[357]Hannan Al Saidi is the chairperson of the local Women's NDP Secretariat and the chairperson of the New Fostat NGO. The exemplar case of Hannan Al Sai'di as an NDP cadre will be elaborated on extensively later in this chapter.
[358] Interview with Hannan Al Sai'di, Cairo, April 30th, 2008

candidates, the truth is it deterred a lot of other candidates that had nothing to do with the MB from participating.

Al Sai'di argues that the policies of reform that seem to be championed by the NDP are actually collapsing as a result of such irregularities.

> The selection of candidates for those elections was tainted with favoritism. A lot of the faithful young NDP members representing the new wave of reform were either deterred or prevented from running for the elections. In Misr Al Qadima, almost 1000 out of the total 7000 NDP members in the area resigned in protest. Even party members are now disillusioned…On the street level, feelings of hatred and mistrust towards the NDP have increased. Empowered and working from within, there was a good case for someone like me to defend the NDP. But now, after the failures in these elections, I couldn't even defend the line of the party to the layman on the street.[359]

It is noteworthy also to mention that 2011 shall witness the presidential elections, in which the parliament and the municipalities will play the biggest role in accordance with the 2005 constitutional amendments.[360] According to these amendments, an independent presidential candidate is required to first secure nominations from, at least, 250 MPs and MC members before being eligible for running for the elections. It is therefore essential for the ruling party to ensure that it holds a very tight grip over these local councils, from which a plethora of votes could be very easily secured, in order to block the chances of an

[359] Ibid

[360] Nathan Brown (2007). Egypt's Controversial Constitutional Amendments: A Textual Analysis. Carnegie Endowment For International Peace. In 2005 President Mubarak introduced a constitutional amendment that instated that the President of the Republic should be elected by direct voting in which multiple presidential candidates compete, instead of referendum as it has been the case since 1952. However, the prerequisites put forward for a nominee to be eligible for presidential candidacy were, in reality, very hard to achieve if the candidate was not an NDP candidate. One of these conditions dictated that independent candidates (those that do not belong to the senior rankings of an already existing political party) have to secure the approval of 250 MPs and MC members. Provided the overwhelming majority of the NDP in these two entities -Currently 343 out of Egypt's 444 MPs are from the NDP and also, after the 2008 MC elections, the majority of MC members all over the country come from the NDP- it will be virtually impossible for any candidate that is not supported by the NDP to proceed in the presidential elections. Other political parties were given an interim phase of 10 years, in which they could nominate senior-ranking party members for presidency, and after which they will have to at least secure a 3 percent membership in the Parliament as well as in the Shura Council in order to be able to nominate any of their members for presidency.

MB candidate running for presidency. By virtue of being an officially banned group, the MB's candidate will most likely be an independent.

In line with Al Saidi's testimony, and as shall be displayed later in this chapter, it appears as if these acts of intimidation were predominantly aimed at those NDP cadres that were associated with the new-guard. As will be reviewed, evidence seems to suggest that the old-guard cadres of the NDP, in conjunction with the allied state-apparatuses, primarily the police, are attempting to consolidate the supposed process of "reform" that was initiated by the new-guard.

NDP notables in Misr Al Qadima

Hajj Ahmed Najar: The 'Classical' Lesser Notable

Hajj Ahmed Najar is the secretary of the district (*shiyakha*) of the NDP in `Ain Al Sirra. He runs a car accessories shop in the area as well as a small travel agency and his family has been residing there for several generations. He also operates the People's Services Office of the NDP. By and large, Najar could be considered as a lesser notability due to the respectable socioeconomic status he preserves, based on his profitable business and sound reputation as a family notable with strong ties with the members of his community. Najar has a limited educational background, for he has not finished his high school education, yet he has a sizable political role to fulfill as an NDP member and a close aide and adviser to the MPs and the MC members of the area. Since his childhood, he was interested in political action in this district. Dr. Shahin, the father of the current MP Dr. Ahmed Shahin, was basically the one who trained and encouraged Najar and a few other youngsters in the area as young cadres at the time to get involved in political

campaigning and networking among the people. "The actual membership of the NDP came in 1990 when I became a member in the party unit. In 2008, I became the secretary of the district. I didn't actually look for the post but it was offered by the party. This post requires some free time throughout the year, and that's why I couldn't accept it earlier. When the time was suitable, I accepted it."[361] Hajj Najar is widely perceived in the area as a man-of-good and a notable to be sought in dire situations. Some people in the neighborhood were not even certain of his political affiliation, yet stated that they are well-acquainted with him as a helpful and influential figure in `Ain Al Sirra, and that they are likely to approach him to resolve a dispute or facilitate a health or an administrative service with state authorities.[362]

The NDP Services Office that is supervised by Najar undertakes all kinds of services possible to the people of the area. In addition to the usual health, educational, and social services, the office also acts as a linkage between the people and the MPs. Najar ensures that the requests of the people of the area are submitted to and followed up on by the parliamentarians. The social spectrum of the office is probably the most vivid sector of activities it provides, and it includes frequent services to the poor, the orphans, the unemployed…etc. Students that are incapable of paying their tuition, patients that cannot afford their treatment and the youngsters that are unemployed are among the various echelons of locals that Najar serves. For example, if a patient is incapable of affording the cost of the hospital that he/she is to receive the treatment in or the price of the medication pertaining, it is sometimes sufficient for such a patient to approach the office and his/her financial condition would be assessed by the respective social worker

[361] Interview with Hajj Ahmed Najar, June 12th, 2008

[362] Interviews with various residents from `Ain Al Sirra, May and June 2008

in the office. More often than not, the verification-of-need process is quick and simple in order to ensure the swift treatment of the patient. If the case is assessed to be eligible for treatment in one of the NDP-sponsored health clinics in the area, the patient is then directed to the clinic with the needed expertise to treat him/her and, if not, the office liaises with the relevant state hospital that the patient could receive the treatment at.[363]

Of course, such services are quite popular, given the relatively harsh economic conditions that the majority of the locals suffer from, however Najar assures that the office usually does its best not to turn down any request that it receives. Yet, logically speaking, it would be virtually impossible for the few services offices of the area to meet all the demands of the patients in need in an area like Misr Al Qadima and, consequently, the waiting lists of these offices are quite sizable. Some of the locals that have attempted to apply for the services of the office assert that, in order to be considered for such services in a timely fashion, one has to have some personal connection or relationship with a figure like Najar to facilitate the process. Others maintained that it is usually those that are, one way or another, associated with the official rankings of the NDP that would expectedly get some preferential treatment in the services' offices.[364]

The funding of these aforementioned services mainly comes from the party itself along with the donations of some "benevolent" notables in the area, according to Najar. The local MC also plays a role in this process, as it often facilitates the channeling of these donations to the families of the area on the ground. The current MC is quite active in this regard, and it is comprised of 10 NDP members, one Wafd and one Tagamoe` member. The Services Office has been instilled in the area since 2007 and there is

[363] Interview with Hajj Ahmed Najar, June 12th, 2008
[364] Interviews with various residents from `Ain Al Sirra, May and June 2008

another office also across the street, run by Shahin Fouad, the current MP, and it orchestrates a plethora of similar services and activities[365]

During the electoral processes, whether it is a parliamentarian or a municipal election, the role of a figure like Hajj Najar is quite pivotal:

> Being the secretary of the district, I have to take care of a lot of issues relating to the NDP in the parliamentary and the municipal elections. Being educated or high classed is not sufficient here…you have to be humble, helpful to the people, and subsequently you will be popular: loved and accepted by the locals. This helped me in actualizing the role I opt for as the secretary of the *shiyakha*, campaigning for the candidates of the NDP in the parliamentary and municipal elections. Gathering/securing votes is a tedious process that requires a lot of networks and not only resources. In other words, you could have the funds and resources needed, but lacking the information on how to channel them or who to give them to can turn these capacities to idle resources.[366]

Najar also reckons that, throughout the past few years, the scope of services provided in the popular neighborhoods in the name of the NDP has increased considerably. He states that, overall, there has been some positive change in the way the NDP deals with the popular basis of the society. "I think, on aggregate, the party is now more focused on actually ensuring that it gets through to those in need with the biggest amount of services possible. Sometimes also the services that are being increasingly channeled to the people do not stem directly from the party itself but from businessmen and other figures that are affiliated with it."[367]

The examples that Hajj Najar cites here are Dr. Ahmed Shahin and Hajj Abdelhamid Sha`ban, the current MPs who both, he thinks, pose a good case for benevolent businessmen that spend from their own pockets for the good of the people. Shahin is the chair of the Islamic Unity NGO and a board member in the charity

[365] Interview with Hajj Ahmed Najar, June 12th, 2008
[366] Ibid
[367] Ibid

foundation of Al Nour Mosque.[368] Yet what Hajj Najar refers to as mere benevolence is not exactly so. The social and financial services provided by those figures have played a crucial part in consolidating their socio-economic profile and their popularity in the area as men-of-good. This, in turn led to a sizable boost regarding their political prospects within the party and on the street, which surely increases their chances in dominating upcoming parliamentary elections. And as asserted prior in the first and second chapters of this research, for such figures being an MP is a predominantly symbiotic relationship, in which, in return for disbursing funds and resources within the patron-client network, the MP /businessman gets closer to the circles of power within state institutions.

In the `Ain Al Sirra area, there have been more attempts to attract people via direct incentives: jobs, tuition fees, health services…etc. For quite sometime, the activities of the NDP were concentrated in the realm of recreational trips and seminars and that was by no means sufficient to counterbalance the wide array of services provided by the MB. The realization of the importance of popular support was also reflected in the criteria set by the leadership of the party in selecting the party candidates for the most recent (2007) municipal elections, for example. NDP Secretary of Organization, Ahmed Ezz[369], decided that in order for the member to be eligible for the party nomination, he/she has to recruit a certain number of new members into the ranks of the party. This encouraged the cadres of the party to focus more on networking and campaigning on the

[368]Ibid. Note the Islamic characterization of the charitable activity despite the affiliation of Dr. Shahin to the supposedly secular NDP. Sometimes this Islamic façade is portrayed in order to compete with and offset the counter-services provided by the MB as the representative of the Islamic activities.

[369]Ahmed Ezz, mentioned in several parts of this writing, is arguably Egypt's most powerful regime collaborator/supporter from within the community of mega-businessmen and a very close aide and friend of Gamal Mubarak. He is the NDP membership secretary and the chair of the Parliamentarian Budgetary Committee, and he is also one of the country's biggest industry tycoons; a virtual monopolizer of the steel industry through his mega-corporate, Ezz Steel.

popular level. The least number that was gathered was 100 new memberships; others got 200 and 300 new memberships. This also helped bring in new and fresh faces to the forefront of the NDP, as they were more adamant on popular networking than some of the old cadres that were not involved in the affairs of the polity on the ground level. Several of the old faces fell in the elections in this district due to the lack of networking and popular appeal.[370]

Hajj Najar also states that, on the street level, the popularity of the NDP is on the rise when compared to the MB or the other Islamists. However, this popularity could still vary from one street to another. The competition between the NDP and the MB is fierce and ongoing:

> I think we have been scoring more points of popularity in the area lately. Sometimes, there is no unitary logic that determines areas of power and influence of the NDP vs. the MB. Yet, on aggregate, the socioeconomic status of the area determines to a great deal where its allegiance is. We have the Sunnia mosque nearby and it's been used by some MB affiliated figures, but now there's a tight security hold on such venues and they are not operational. A few years ago they were, but there seems to be a security revival nowadays that was largely successful in halting the activities of their cadres. However, in some other areas they might be more active due to the socioeconomic context. In areas like `Ezbet Qarn, for instance, and due to the harsh conditions that people live in there, it is easier for the MB to gain more popularity. People there are mainly manual laborers and they suffer from rough living conditions, so it is easier for them to be polarized in the direction of either the MB or in the direction of drugs and crime...etc.[371]

Still, Najar thinks, more needs to be done by the NDP, if it is to offset the aggregate supremacy that the MB and the other Islamists have achieved over it, throughout the past two decades or so, on the street level. More emphasis has to be put on services; people are in need and despite the relatively recent realization of the importance of popular

[370] Interview with Hajj Ahmed Najar, June 12th, 2008

[371] Ibid

outreach on the part of the NDP, there is still a lack in some of the basic services. According to Hajj Najar, the bulk of those that get the support of the NDP are still minimal when compared to the proportion of those who are actually in need or those that are supported by the MB and the other Islamists.

Exemplar cases of various categories of NDP-affiliated lesser notabilities: Hannan Al Sa`idi versus Abdelhamid Shehata

In the milieu of the Misr Al Qadima polity, there is indeed a variety of sorts of lesser notabilities that are associated with the NDP. Among those NDP-affiliated notabilities, the socioeconomic, cultural and political backgrounds of the notables could be so different to the extent that it leads to conflicts erupting between such figures. As stated earlier, the lack of homogeneity within the NDP is rather apparent due to the absence of a clear ideology or platform, which leads to this largely chaotic and sometimes contradictory set of profiles for NDP leaders and members. The upcoming example, however, suggests that within this pool of different sorts of notabilities, certain notables are by far more influential and successful than others.

Hannan Al Sa`idi is one of the most active operative cadres of the NDP in `Ain Al Sirra. Her family originally comes from Assiut in Upper Egypt, like a multitude of other families in Misr Al Qadima, but she was born and raised in `Ain Al Sirra and considers herself to be *bent balad* [372](daughter of the land), in reference to her strong affinity and belonging to the popular area. Al Sa`idi poses an interesting and rather rare example of

[372]In chapters II and III, the terms *ibn balad* and *bent balad* were introduced and elaborated upon extensively. These terms bear a plethora of cultural and social connotations, predominantly emphasizing the moral goodness, helpfulness and supportive character of the people of a certain area or neighborhood, especially in Cairo.

political agency in the area, and perhaps in the entirety of the popular quarters of Cairo, where the political participation and leadership of females is considerably limited, especially in the milieu of official institutions: political parties, NGOs…etc. Al Sa`idi is the chairperson of the local Women's NDP Secretariat and the chairperson of the New Fostat NGO. In `Ain Al Sirra, she is widely perceived as a respectable and influential figure who is capable of extending support to the people of the area.[373]

Picture 5.c: Headquarters of the New Fostat NGO

The main activities of the New Fostat NGO are quite diverse and include a variety of trainings and course offerings in interpersonal skills, political awareness and empowerment, in addition to vocational skills programs for the local inhabitants of the area. So far, more than a 1000 people have been involved in these various training programs. Misr Al Qadima suffers from a set of socioeconomic problems, most importantly according to Al Sa`idi, dropping-out of primary education (14,000 children

[373] Interviews with `Ain Al Sirra residents, February and March 2008

in the age of schooling according to recent estimates), child labor and unemployment.[374] One of the biggest achievements of the New Fostat was aiding the local skin tannery laborers of the area in lobbying against the relocation of their workshops out of Misr Al Qadima to Al Robiki area on the outskirts of Cairo; almost 50 kilometers away form their original location now. Prospectively, 22,000 workers and shop-owners are expected to suffer from the consequences of this relocation, which was authorized by the Ministry of Industry and the Industrial Chamber of Skin Tannery:

> Under the auspices of New Fostat, a multifaceted campaign was organized to freeze the process or, at best, ensure the best terms possible if this relocation is to take place. The tannery workshops had their own demands that had to be fulfilled…A media campaign was also organized to present the various dimensions of the issue to the public. The NGO organized the necessary networks with the media. A surprise visit to the designated area was also organized in the presence of the media and a meeting with the deputy minister of industry took place on the spot. Accordingly, some of the demands of the skin tannery workers were met; mainly exempting the workers from the cost of the new workshops.[375]

Of course a lot of the demands of the skin-tannery industrial community have not been yet met and, hence, the New Fostat campaign against the relocation continues.

The lack of proper commuting facilities and the inadequate design of the new workshops (characterized with an Italian architectural design that is unsuitable with the comparatively hot atmosphere of Cairo) were among some of these still unresolved issues. There were five major businessmen that were in control of the Industrial Chamber of Skin Tannery that stood for this inadequate relocation and they were consequently

[374] Interview with Hannan Al Sai'di, March 6th, 2008. These abovementioned figures cited by Al Sai'di were documented in fieldwork studies undertaken by New Fostat-affiliated researchers in the area of Misr Al Qadima

[375]Ibid; the decision, which was taken by the ministry and encouraged by the chamber, was to be implemented in 2007 upon completion of the newly designated areas, however that did not take place in due time because of abovementioned opposition. Had the Ministry of Industry insisted on the relocation taking place in spite of the will of the workers, a confrontation between the executive authorities -in this case the police apparatus which would be mandated with closing down and evacuating the old workplace- and the people of the area, would have expectedly erupted.

sacked from the board during elections, as a result. There was a lobbying process within the Chamber that succeeded in bringing other new faces to the board of the Chamber and New Fostat had a role to play in this scheme as well. The NGO worked with those skin-tannery professionals eligible to vote, on their presentation and negotiations skills, and aided them in organizing their campaign inside the Chamber against those businessmen and board members that supported the relocation of the workshops.[376]

Being an NDP member, Al Sa`idi states, did not necessarily make their case stronger. "I do not think it was the NDP affiliation that made things happen in that campaign. It was perhaps the NGO itself that made the difference…The NGO is in itself independent of the NDP." She also thinks that she would not allow her NGO to turn into an arm for the NDP, differentiating it from the other deficient examples of some NGOs that are merely subservient to the whims of some political or religious orders. Yet, she stresses that, although by law it is banned for there to be a role for the party in channeling resources to the local population through an NGO for political reasons, there still exists some functional ties between the NGO and the NDP. "Nonetheless some networking exists between the NGO and some party members that happen to be helpful when it comes to obtaining some permissions or services from the relevant government authorities. Yet some politicians now do not respect this divide, and end up establishing NGOs to increase their popularity and attain political objectives."[377]

[376]Ibid.

[377]Ibid; In Misr Al Qadima, Mamdouh Mekky is often cited as an exemplar case of NGO manipulation for the benefit of the NDP. Mekky, who is one of the five big businessmen mentioned earlier, is a local notable and an NDP veteran who has established an NGO that aims at channeling a multitude of resources and services to the people of the area in the name of the NDP. Mekky has a virtually non-existent record of social work as he only recently (in 1999) entered the realm of social work, arguably aiming only at raising his political profile.

Al Sa`idi reckons that, contrary to the widespread conviction among the residents of the area that the NDP is rather inefficient regarding the problems that are faced by the populace, there is still a lot of good that can come out of the NDP in this area. "The problems are huge and they require a plethora of policy alterations…We have been working on altering some laws. As an NGO we tried to establish conventions that gathered some of the locals and some parliamentarians to address some of the problems faced by the people and the means and ways by which they could be overcome via legislating new legal codes or altering others." Some successes were met for instance in modifying the labor law to reduce child labor, which is quite predominant in the area. The new law is much stricter now, severely punishing work-owners which are accused of facilitating or allowing child labor in the workplace. Additionally, and in the aftermath of the recent successes of the MB in enhancing their popularity by providing direct services to the people, the NDP had to follow suit and similar ventures, including medical caravans that provide health services throughout the year to various segments of the society were put forward.[378]

`Ain Al Sirra and Misr Al Qadima proper: sociopolitical differences and the role of immigrants

One of the main sociopolitical differences between these two constituencies of the Misr Al Qadima district is the impact of immigration coming from Upper Egypt. As

[378] Ibid; the researcher has observed some of these NDP-sponsored medical caravans which constitute one of the primary tools of polishing up the image of the party in rural and low-income urban communities. These caravans, organized and funded by the party along with some major financial corporations working under the umbrella of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), usually provide the people with simple and on-site medical services, such as blood pressure and sugar-level measurement, swift treatments for flu and headache, and sometimes also a section for diagnosing the cases of patients with more chronic symptoms and providing them with the relevant recipes.

opposed to the relatively homogenous and stable population of Misr Al Qadima proper, `Ain Al Sirra is still characterized with a sizable population of immigrants, particularly from the Upper Egyptian governorates of Sohag, Assiut and Qena. These waves of immigration have been ongoing until relatively recently, with a plethora of second and third generation of immigrants currently residing in the area. A big portion of those *Sa`idi* (Upper Egyptian) immigrants are engaged in economic activities like operating small restaurants, kiosks and juice shops or opening up real estate contractor workshops that provide semi-skilled workers for constructional activities; painters, builders…etc. These *Sa`idi* people indeed constitute a lively reservoir for the lesser notabilities that this research is concerned with. In addition to the extended family/clan aspect that sometimes characterizes the biases and political decisions of this immigrant population, there is also a dimension of regional solidarity, whereby the people of Sohag are expected to unite together in the face of those that come from other provinces and so forth. In the local polity, one finds that, within the six local Party Units which are composed of 10 members each, there is a lot of alliances and coordination taking place between some members based on this aspect of regional solidarity, mostly in the `Ain Al Sirra NDP Party Units. Yet one also finds that some of the NDP figures that trace their roots back to Upper Egypt, and who have been based and operational in `Ain Al Sirra for several generations, play vital roles in the local politics of the Misr Al Qadima district regardless of their regional or clan solidarities[379].

[379] Interviews with Jamilla Abdelmajid and Misr Qadima locals, April 2008

Big Families…Enter the Notables

There is a sizable role that is being played by the big families and notables in the polity of Misr Al Qadima. As it was the case with the areas of influence of the notables associated with the ISIs introduced in the previous chapter in the case of the MB, the areas of influence of the big families and notables affiliated with the NDP are most apparent in arenas such as, electoral competitions, mediation and conflict resolution between the inhabitants of the area, and in channeling resources and services to the populace. In this regard also, the *Sa'idi* (Upper Egyptian) families and clans stand out due to the dominance of the socio-cultural norms that place a great importance on the value of familial and clan bonding and cohesion among them.

> They have a very important role in elections. Magdy Allam (The NDP MP), for instance, depended on the support of the big families of Fom Al Khalij area, who simply vote in groups, often according to the recommendations of the big family notables. Some of the big leaders of certain areas have a certain price in accordance with the amount of votes they can secure. For example, a certain big name could guarantee that 1000 votes (his following) would go in a certain direction if he was bought out by a certain price, say a 100,000 LE. Another could guarantee 2000 votes and would, consequently, cost more…etc. Some of the big names in the Masr Qadima area include: Fathy Galid, the Abu Al Seoud family…etc. [380]

Regional alliances also play a role in the political decisions taken by the notables. For example, Assiut and Sohag are the two biggest governorates that are represented by respective immigrants. Some of the meaningful figures from each region would establish their own NGOs to ensure providing the necessary services, predominantly to their respective incumbent locals. More often that not, regional alliances play an important role in determining the direction of votes as well.[381]

[380] Interview with Hannan Al Sai'di, Cairo, April 30th, 2008

[381] Ibid

Expectedly, if the notables of Assiut decide that their votes would be directed to a certain candidate, it becomes an issue of regional solidarity in the face of those of Sohag, and vice versa.[382] Of course these regional solidarities are consolidated and further enhanced on the basis of mutual benefit. Again, revisiting the patron-client model introduced in chapters I and II, the clan leaders and sub-leaders here act as the patrons and sub-patrons of their communities and it is the disbursement of the resources vertically and horizontally that strengthens the loyalty of the client (clan member/voter…etc.) to the respective patron.

Example of an NDP-affiliated lesser notability: Abdelhamid Shehata

Abdelhamid Shehata is yet another example of lesser notability in Misr Al Qadima. He was a construction worker and, over the years, accumulated a considerable sum of savings that enabled him to become a real-estate contractor and construction/pebble factory owner.[383] Gradually, he built a good repute for himself in the area as a benevolent societal leader and started establishing good contacts with the police and other state authorities. More than once, he has intervened with the local state authorities to resolve conflicts erupting between locals and has often helped in getting some people out of jail.[384] He is also a *semsar* (election trader); he would first register for the elections, knowing quite well that he will not win, and then other candidates would start approaching him in order for him to withdraw and ensure that the votes that he

[382] Ibid

[383] The rise of Shehata is not very typical yet possible. In the post-*infitah* period, there were a lot of similar cases that witnessed the rise of a construction worker or a builder to prominence, thanks to the relatively high profitability resulting in from investing in the constructional activities in the post-Infitah era in general, especially if it was in the trendy constructional neighborhoods that flourished in that period.

[384] Interviews with Abdelhamid Shehata, May, 2008

controls go for them. Shehata has earned a reputation among the people originating from Assiut that he is the problem-solver and the dispenser of resources and services to the simple workers and other similar societal segments in the area. He controls an average of 3,500 votes in Misr Al Qadima and Dar Essalam and there is usually an announced price for this bulk of votes. According to several respondents, the price of Shehata's votes is tentatively 250,000 LE. This sum of money is usually divided between Shehata and the voters that he controls.[385]

However, sometimes, there could be a conflict between the regional alliance and the financial agreement. Depending upon the solidarity of the Assiutis of the area, sometimes figures like Shehata would direct the votes for the benefit of a candidate that is from Assiut instead of another that already paid the dues of these votes. Logically, such a scam would be almost impossible to discover, provided that it will be practically impossible to find out where those votes went exactly. When it came to the 2008 municipal elections, Shehata's influence was so immense that his son was subsequently put on the lists of most candidates and eventually won a seat in the MC. In 2005, Taissir Mattar, the current Misr Al Qadima NDP MP, depended on his collaboration with Shehata for votes.[386]

The tactics used by Shehata to enhance his repute and stature within the area vary. He could, for instance, spread rumors among the traditional cafes, which are quite popular in the relatively low-income communities such as Misr Al Qadima, enhancing his image of bravery and grandeur. Furthermore, he could utilize the strong ties with the police and make them arrest a few suspects and then appear as the hero of the day by

[385] Interviews with Misr Al Qadima residents, NDP members and social workers, March-May 2008
[386] Ibid

walking out of the police station a couple of days after with the briefly-imprisoned with him, again a display of power and influence in the neighborhood. He later joined the NDP as a member and helped make a good number of people also join the NDP.[387] Some irregularities undertaken by Shehata could be overlooked by the authorities, in return for ensuring that the votes he controls would go for the candidate that is supported by the regime. For instance, the police apparatus is quite aware of the money that is paid to Shehata by certain candidates, but that could be overlooked provided that the votes would go for the candidate that is favored by the regime, usually the NDP candidate. For figures like Shehata, the relationship with the regime is a mutually beneficial one. For the police apparatus, Shehata fulfills a multitude of roles; sometimes as an informant on the activities that might be deemed threatening or unwelcomed by oppositional figures in the community, and sometimes as a dispenser of resources and services presented to the populace in the name of the NDP. He is also a popular and benevolent leader, whose appealing profile is, in a sense, an additive publicity tool for the NDP in the area.

The 2007/2008 MC Elections Standoff

Hannan Al Sa`idi's personal experience with the elections is somehow revealing. She was initially encouraged by various leaders within the party to apply for the internal preliminary elections within the NDP. However, the preliminaries were in fact a scam; more of a theatrical façade to ensure pivoting certain figures forward into the elections, and excluding others. Apparently, some powerful figures from the NDP of Misr Al Qadima considered Al Sa`idi as a threat and were adamant on preventing her from

[387] Ibid

advancing beyond the stage of the preliminaries. Violence was used against her campaigning crew, and the secretary of the NDP's local office, Diab Ramadan Abo Lebda, championed the scheme of preventing her from proceeding in her electoral campaign. Al Sa`idi's brother was attacked and injured by thugs that were allegedly, according to Al Sa`idi and members of her campaigning crew, linked to Abo Lebda and, although the case was reported by the police, no action was taken against the aggressors. Ultimately, Al Sa`idi withdrew her candidacy in the preliminaries, fearing for her security and her family's.[388]

In fact the aforementioned Abo Lebda has a very strong relationship with Bakr Omar[389], an MP from the Misr Al Qadima region, and there seemed to be a tacit agreement between them that figures like Al Sa`idi, who previously refused to be co-opted by their clique, which also includes the previously mentioned popular NDP notable Abdelhamid Shehata, should not proceed in these elections. In the aftermath of the elections, Al Sa`idi resigned from her post at the Women's NDP Secretariat. Mofid Shehab, state minister for legal affairs, contacted her to try and make her change her mind, but she had decided. Later, the party denied the fact that it had received Al Sa`idi's and others' resignations, although massive collective resignations were submitted, but Al Sa`idi had kept a copy from the resignation memo she originally submitted. With the police on the side of those that almost violently forced her out of the elections and the party apparently incapable of supporting her case, Al Sa`idi had very little to do to levy the unjust situation that she was put in. The only thing she could do, as the MC elections

[388] Interviews with Hannan Al Sai'di and members of her campaigning crew, Cairo, April 30th, 2008
[389] Bakr Omar, introduced earlier in Chapter IV, is a Misr Al Qadima MP, who, in spite of his official affiliation with the NDP, has been dubbed as a MB sympathizer and was even accused by some circles within the police of being a MB member.

initiated, was to utilize the New Fostat NGO to monitor the elections and report the irregularities that were expected to take place during the elections.

> We, being those that were trained as a part of the Political Awareness Program, mostly simple people from the locals of the area, actually observed and monitored the elections. Out of sheer will, with no direct material benefits involved, those people, mostly young men and women, took part in observing the polling stations and monitoring the irregularities. In front each of the poll stations, we had an observer that monitored the timeframe of the operative times of the ballot boxes, the frequency of voters…etc. We were planning for a press conference to display the results of the report of the monitoring process but due to immense pressure from the police, we had to cancel it. The result, of course, was an immense amount of irregularities that were almost directed and manipulated by the strongmen of the area and the party to ensure the success of certain candidates.[390]

Overall, the practices of the NDP along with the relevant state authorities involved in the electoral process show that there seems to be a tendency from the party to support certain figures that would maintain a mutually beneficial relationship with the regime. Those would be either some strongmen or powerful figures that have ties with the police and the big families…etc, or others that would simply listen to the orders of the party without critical thinking or discussion, or, preferably, both typologies.

As a matter of fact, over the past 30 years or so, the NDP has been adamant on co-opting the popular figures that would enable the party to gain access to the populace in the low-income communities:

> Typically, such figures will have to, either belong to, or be in close touch with, the big families and clans of the areas within which they reign supreme, be it in the rural areas or the popular quarters within the urban areas. I come from Upper Egypt and usually the party leaders would go and look for the notables of the families and clans of the village or town and co-opt them to join the ranks of the NDP, particularly prior to the elections. During the Nasser years and afterwards the modern state/party regime was more or less shaped and made fit with the traditional society/polity of the rural and popular areas. This enabled the NDP to look

[390] Interview with Hannan Al Sa`idi, Cairo, April 30th, 2008

for and lure the traditional leadership of the family/clan/village…etc.[391]

As will be suggested below, Al Sa`idi's case brings to the forefront some interesting observations regarding the dichotomy between the new-guard cadres versus the old-guard powerhouses of the party and the societal forces associated with them.

Tensions and conflict within the NDP

Within the NDP, there is a clear contradiction between the discourse of the party and the actions taken on the ground. The discourse of reform and democratization pivoted by the higher levels is transformed into alliances built with notable figures, regardless of the legitimacy of their activities, in order to secure votes and popularity on the street. Now, figures like Al Sa`idi and other likeminded NDP members have fallen out of the grace of some NDP and state circles after attempting to stand in the face of the popular notables and the police apparatus. As a result of lacking the power or the leverage to stand in opposition to the state-sponsored notabilities, these figures can not provide the people of the area with the same scale of services as they used to do before. For example, prior to this electoral dilemma, it was doable for someone like Al Sa`idi to get through to the relevant ministers and other figures of authority in the state system, but now it is almost possible for her to organize a press conference, let alone get through to one of the aforementioned figures within the state-system.

Indeed people like Shehata and other figures like Bakr Omar and Yossry Bayoumy, who were both introduced in the previous chapter, in a sense, constitute a particular typology with their relatively profitable commercial activities and their socio-cultural profile as big family notables with sound political networks. Subsequently, the

[391] Interviews with Hossam Tammam, Cairo, July 2008

people of the area would seek such figures for conflict resolution and mediation due to their intermediary roles with the government. "These are just a few examples and there are more of them on the lower levels. Those lesser people also help this clique of patrons accomplish their objectives by connecting them to the people on the street and, in return, gain protection from the thug activities exercised by people like Shehata and Abo Lebda and, at the same time, utilize the wide array of networks that such figures maintain with government offices and services".[392]

In short, in the context of this lesser notability, financial resources and sound social and political networks within the community and the state-apparatus are now the main tools for political accession. For figures like Najar, Khaled Abdelfattah, and Abdelhamid Shehata, the previous attributions were obviously crucial for their political ascendance. For others, like Hannan Al Sa`idi, and despite her NDP affiliation, the lack of the right scope of networks within the community and the state apparatus, and even within the NDP itself, has apparently hindered her from actualizing her role as a notable, despite her successes in providing a multitude of services to the people of Misr Al Qadima via the New Fostat NGO, particularly to the skin-tannery community. And here a few question marks could also be raised regarding the role of the central authorities of the NDP and their role in pivoting certain NDP cadres at the expense of others. Importantly, the case of Al Sa`idi reflects that lacking the necessary linkages with the interconnected network of alliances that sometimes involve the old-guard patrons on the central level of the party, along with key-figures in state apparatuses, such as the police, and lesser notabilities like Shehata and Mattar, on the level of the lower echelons of the polity, would almost eventually deter the chances of someone like Al Sa`idi in elevating further

[392] Interview with Hannan Al Sai'di, Cairo, April 30th, 2008

in the milieu of parliamentary or municipal elections. In the upcoming section, more light will be shed on the role played by lesser notabilities as intermediary sociopolitical agents.

NDP patronage and clientelism in Misr Al Qadima: Intermediary sociopolitical roles of lesser notabilities

This section aims at scrutinizing the role that the lesser notabilities play within the popular quarters as intermediary sociopolitical agents between the higher echelons of the NDP and the popular segments of the polity. In doing so, it also attempts to understand the advent of lesser notabilities and its potential impact on the prospects of the new-guard cadres of the NDP, within the popular polity.

Iman Bibars: A counter example of the Lesser Notable? The female, well-educated Bibars and the collusion with the lesser notability

Iman Bibars is the founder and chairperson of the Association for Development and Empowerment of Women (ADEW) NGO, which operates in Misr Al Qadima proper and `Ain Al Sirra. She initiated her social activism in the areas of Misr Al Qadima and Manial (the more affluent middle-class/bourgeois neighborhood adjacent to Misr Al Qadima where she was born and raised) in 1985, driven by the desire to help develop and empower the women of her district, as she says. She considered running for the parliamentary elections more than once in order to broaden the scope of services provided to the people of the area further, and has been a member in the NDP Policies Committee, the chief policymaking arm of the politburo of the party, since 2005.[393] In a sense, Bibars represents a certain sort of notability in Misr Al Qadima, but it is by no means a lesser notability. With a PhD in Development Studies from the UK and a strong

[393] Interview with Iman Bibars, June 5th, 2008

functional relationship with people like Gamal Mubarak at the apex of the NDP, Bibars represents a sort of an elitist notability. Nonetheless, for someone like Bibars, in order to get through to the lower echelons of the Misr Al Qadima polity, strong alliances with lesser notabilities have to be in place to ensure the dissemination of resources and services to and among the populace of this popular neighborhood. In many senses, the interactions between such elitist notabilities at the zenith of the political hierarchy with the lesser notabilities help reveal how the Lesser Notables of a popular quarter like Misr Al Qadima play an essential role also in consolidating the sociopolitical profile of the NDP and the higher echelons of notables associated with it.

Bibars says that there are mainly two categories of people that are involved in the social services sector (NGOs…etc) as well as in political action and mobilization. There are those that entered into the social services spectrum in order to enhance their political profile and gain political benefits via channeling services to the people, and there are those that were already involved in social work then got involved in the political process as a means to serve the people further.

> I think I belong to the latter category, which is by and large the minority. In 1984, I started my career in development by focusing on the popular quarters, which was a pioneering initiative as these areas where predominantly neglected on the level of the public discourse. ADEW was a pioneer in many senses, being secular, non-sectarian, development/women oriented NGO. Most of our social services were also novel at the time. For example, we were the first NGO to introduce projects of microcredit in the realm of the popular quarters…etc. More specifically, women were also at the core of our social services.[394]

Bibars also claims that being in the NDP was not really a priority for her. "I was mostly focused on the realm of the social rather than the political, but it seemed that the relative

[394] Ibid

success of the NGO on the popular level in the areas of Manial and Misr Al Qadima drew the attention of the NDP, especially with the new generation of Gamal Mubarak and his entourage, which is my generation."[395]

In 2004 Bibars was approached by the NDP to join the ranks of the party and she agreed. At the time, she was actually convinced there was some positive change in the way the party was being operated. "I went in with my own terms and I was pretty much able to say what I want in the ranks of the party even if it went against the whims of the members of the Policies Committee. I am not a militant and I've always believed in the possibility of change from within the ranks of the system."[396] Therefore joining the party gave Bibars an opportunity to lobby for the benefits of the people of the area; skin tannery laborers, street vendors, and the female heads of households were among those segments that she worked with closely.

Bibars worked closely with several other NGOs and politicians with regard to issues such as the dilemma of the relocation of the skin tannery workshops, mentioned earlier in this chapter, where there was some scrutiny and coordination with people like Al Sa'idi from New Fostat. With the street vendors, it was a funny story as there was a massive campaign that targeted their sheer presence on the street, coinciding with the presidential elections of 2005. As if the party was aiming at reducing its popularity on the street at the time of the elections, this governmental campaign was poorly timed and it even tackled those who had official licensing to practice their commercial activities on the street. "I responded with organized mobilization of those people, in the form of

[395]Ibid. Iman Bibars and Gamal Mubarak both graduated from the same American University in Cairo class of '83

[396]Ibid

regular meetings and organizational charts of their tentative number and the scope of their activities, along with a media campaign that aimed at unfolding the brutality of the authorities in dealing with them. These efforts were partially fruitful in presenting their case to the public."[397] A prospective solution that was suggested was to direct some of the microcredit activities of the ADEW NGO towards those people. The NGO initiated this scheme but then the preachers of some mosques got involved, fearing the cooptation of those segments by some NDP-affiliated entities like Bibars' NGO, and an alternative scheme of funding was provided to them by some MB-affiliated ISIs. Eventually, the scheme of funding provided by those ISIs was so massive that it simply overshadowed the efforts of Bibars.[398]

The NDP Electoral Machine…Money Talks

Magued Hammam is a lawyer and a professional elections campaign manager. He worked with various key NDP figures, including Bibars. Hammam is specialized in the elections business and was involved in the elections within the Lawyers Syndicate prior to pursuing his career in Misr Al Qadima. He was born and raised in the area and considers himself an original local of this constituency. Reflecting on the municipal and parliamentary elections in Cairo, Hammam assures that, nowadays, it is all about money. Votes have certain prices, and those candidates who can pay more are likely to win.[399]

[397] Ibid

[398] Interviews with Misr Al Qadima residents, June and July 2008

[399]Political Participation in the 2005 Parliamentary Elections (2006). Cairo: The Egyptian Association for Community Participation Enhancement; in the 2005 elections, many incidents of voter bribery and several other electoral irregularities were reported in the majority of the country's electoral circles. In most of these cases, the socioeconomic context of the area determines, to a great extent, the price of the vote. For example, in the poorer neighborhoods of Cairo, the price of one vote could be a soft drink and a lunch meal.

The example of the 2005 elections was only a case in point, assuring that Shahinaz Al Naggar, the candidate who allegedly spent more than any other parliamentary candidate in this area, and perhaps in Cairo as a whole, channeling millions of pounds for this purpose, was, subsequently, capable of securing victory in the elections. The voters, who are, predominantly, poorly educated and suffer from severe economic conditions, are only limited to a short-term sighted approach that favors the direct material benefit at the time of the elections, but then they end up being deprived of any long-term services from their prospective MPs who had practically paid for their votes at the time of the elections and who are, in return, not expected to do anything further for them as MPs.[400]

Patronage and clientelism in electoral campaigns

In the milieu of electoral campaigns such as that of Bibars, Hammam reckons that the fact that the grassroots foundations are there, facilitates to a great deal the necessary publicity that has to be undergone on the popular level, polishing up the image of the candidate and portraying him/her as a benevolent community figure. For instance, Bibars had been already involved in the local polity of the area for several years as the chairperson of an NGO that was mainly concerned with empowering the women of the district, which made her the prime candidate for winning the elections in 2005. At first, Hammam and the campaigning crew tried stirring things for her, building on the already existing good repute she has in the area. Of course, the reputation in itself was insufficient and they had to channel resources and services to the constituency just like

[400] Interview with Magued Hammam , June 20th, 2008

the rest of the candidates, yet having this repute provided Hammam and his crew with a very good starting point.

On the ground, there are several basic steps that had to be undertaken to organize a successful electoral campaign:

> First, we look at the districts (*shiakhat*) within the constituency. In our electoral circle (#22), there are five districts: Fom Al Khalig, Abol Seoud, Manial East, Manial West and Manial Al Roda. Then, in accordance with the dominant social and economic statuses of these districts, we start designing our plan. For starters, the relatively well-off areas are less important than the ones with harsher socio-economic conditions, as they don't have those potential voters who are willing to go through the hassle of voting in order to reap the benefits of voter clientelism. Conversely, those that reside within the less affluent areas are more willing to do so. In our electoral circle, therefore, more attention was given to the districts of Fom Al Khalig and Aboul Seoud as they clearly belonged to this category.[401]

In such areas, all kinds of services had to be provided to the constituency at a certain time before the elections. Sometimes direct financial endowments have to be provided, granting the notables of the area the sufficient funds they expect in return for them directing the votes they control for the benefit of a certain candidate. These notables are almost four or five within every district, and the amount of money they take would have to be set in accordance with the number of votes they are expected to guarantee. The massive influence of those notables did not only stem from their economic status as the sizable merchants and commercial actors within the area, but it was also shaped by the positions they usually occupied as the heads of families residing within the area, mostly originating from Upper Egypt.[402]

[401] Ibid

[402] Ibid

Also in the milieu of an electoral campaign and on the lower level- that of the ordinary people (commoners) of the neighborhood – a wide array of supplies of goods and services have to be secured for the locals. Blankets, stoves, fridges, Ramadan food packages…etc, are usually distributed among the residents of the area in accordance with their respective needs. The simplest of procedures of verification-of-need have to be maintained to facilitate the ease of transfer of such goods and services, and, more often than not, a simple visit to the candidate's office or NGO is sufficient for a resident to get his/her demand fulfilled. Also, social services are quite important. In weddings and funerals, either the candidate him/herself or representatives on his/her behalf, depending of course on the status of the deceased or the newly wed and the stature of his/her family within the community, has to be present. The candidate or his representative will offer congratulations or condolences, and provide the family of the deceased or the newly wed with financial aid in order to help in the cost of the social congregation and the relevant commitments (the funeral, the wedding expenses…etc).[403] In fact, in Misr Al Qadima and other popular communities, a few NDP cadres maintain the aforementioned activities in an ongoing relationship between them and the people of their constituencies, but the majority of them attempt to focus and intensify efforts in this realm mainly at election time.[404]

Often, a candidate's NGO could also play a role in facilitating the process of getting through to the key-players on the popular level:

> The NGO serves as the basis and the inceptive point of most of our activities. The "Natural Leaderships" (The cadres of the social work

[403]Ibid
[404]Political Participation in the 2005 Parliamentary Elections, The Egyptian Association for Community Participation Enhancement, Cairo, 2005; and Interviews with Misr Al Qadima and Shobra locals, March-May 2008

> within the NGO) usually have their networks of contacts within the various neighborhoods. We would gather with them and outline the main key-players in every district, and then capitalize upon that. The cafés also play a crucial role. Note that we are now in a cafeteria (Rahraha) in Al Roda…I must acquaint myself with the owner, the waiters…etc, and then also, through them, get to know more about those that frequent the place and their affiliations. This of course does not just happen automatically and I'd have to dispense some resources to those working at the cafeteria as well.[405]

In fact, this very same cafeteria served as the meeting point of the chief campaigners during a multitude of the campaigns that Hammam has worked with, including Bibars' campaign.

Bibars had her own experience with the parliamentary elections in Misr Al Qadima, first in 2005 and then in 2007 in the supplementary elections. "In 2005 Shahinaz Al Naggar won the elections simply because she spent the most among all candidates (more than 10 million LE.). In Misr Al Qadima and Manial, she was virtually an unknown face and, within the ranks of the party, she was definitely not wanted because she was an independent candidate, at the time of the elections, but only briefly as she joined the party after winning of course."[406] But, importantly, the NDP was also somehow wary of Al Naggar as she was competing with Mamdouh Thabet Mekky, the strongman of the NDP in this locality. "I think she simply won because she knew how to utilize her resources best and, above all, she was very successful in infiltrating the police and the state security administrations, which both play a crucial role in the electoral processes." [407] In fact, as long as these state authorities succeed in blocking the Islamist candidates from winning, the higher ranks in the government and the party do not really care that much about who wins, as long as it is not an MB candidate. The tactics typically

[405] Interview with Magued Hammam, June 20th, 2008
[406] Interview with Iman Bibars, June 5th, 2008
[407] Ibid

employed by the security apparatuses to offset the chances of a certain candidate winning in the elections involve arresting the strongmen, usually the lesser notabilities, who support this candidate a few days prior to the elections. Indeed in 2005 they arrested the agents of Mekky and other candidates, but not those of Al Naggar.[408]

In 2007 the NDP had to pick a new candidate to compete in the supplementary elections that were held to fill in the position of Al Naggar who had quit her post. With no other potential candidates in sight, it was only logical for Bibars to run as the nominee of the party. Surprisingly however, the party nominated Allam, who had no constituency or popular support whatsoever. All the indicators really did not stand on his side, nonetheless due to the will of Ahmed Ezz; he was chosen to represent the NDP in these elections, so Bibars subsequently decided to run as an independent candidate.[409] "There was sizable support from the people of the district and that came, I think, as a natural reaction to the scope of services provided by the ADEW NGO over the years and at the time of the elections as well. Thousands of school cases, educational funds, short and long-term loans, and home appliances…etc. were distributed among the people of the constituency by the cadres of our NGO." Bibars admits to the fact that she spent a lot of money in her electoral campaign, sometimes utilizing the resources of the NGO, "you have to spend a lot if you're entering the parliamentary elections in an environment like ours…But it was nowhere near to what someone like Shahinaz [Al Naggar] spent."[410]

[408] Ibid

[409] Ahmed Ezz was in fact married to Shahinaz Al Naggar. According to several respondents, there was some competition and, sometimes, animosity between Al Naggar and Bibars, due to their competition as social and political leaderships in the areas of Misr Al Qadima and Manial. Ultimately, Ezz had to make sure that Bibars will not be the one taking Al Naggar's place.

[410] Interview with Iman Bibars, June 14th, 2008; the sources of funding of ADEW include the financial contributions of the founding members, including Bibars herself, in addition to other development and donor entities that are willing to endorse the activities of the NGO.

Eventually, the will of the security apparatus, dictated by Ezz and his clique, prevailed and, thanks to an unprecedented scale of abrupt violence and coercion at the polling stations that virtually banned the majority of the people of Misr Al Qadima that were willing to vote from casting their votes, Allam eventually won the seat.[411] Apparently, and despite the successes that Bibars attained in the Misr Al Qadima district as a societal and political leaders, she was not yet capable of confronting the massive state and security apparatuses that were somewhat mobilized against her in accordance with the instructions of the regime's patron, Ezz. However, Bibars was still quite successful in infiltrating through to the lower/grassroots levels of the Misr Al Qadima polity, and perhaps tracing the hierarchy of networks that she utilized along the process can shed some light on the various strata of the Misr Al Qadima polity and the interactions that take place within the varying socioeconomic and political levels and classes in this area. In fact, tracing these alliances, as will be done below, shall reveal that lesser notabilities have a major role to play in the sociopolitical ascendance of figures like Bibars.

The collusion of elitist and lesser notabilities: patron-client networks

Madiha Ahmed could de described as a prime aide and consultant to several prominent NDP figures in Misr Al Qadima. She has been involved in the social services sector in Cairo's popular quarters for over 15 years. She has worked in ADEW for more than 10 years (1995-2006) and for a long time she was considered as one of Iman Bibars' closest aides. Madiha Ahmed has worked with Bibars as the Manshiyet Nasser[412] resident representative of ADEW. Then, when Bibars decided to proceed further in the elections,

[411] Interviews with NDP members, Misr Al Qadima, June and July 2008
[412] Manshiyet Nasser is one of Cairo's biggest and most populated popular quarters and lies within close proximity to Misr Al Qadima

Ahmed was transferred to the Misr Al Qadima/Manial office. Her role was primarily to ensure the establishment of sound ties with the community and facilitate the proper channeling of the resources and services to the people of the area. This had to be also actualized via the recruitment of the cadres (leaderships) that could be beneficial in this scheme of networking. "We started by enhancing the base of services provided to the Misr Al Qadima/Manial community via the NGO, then capitalized upon that to further advance the sociopolitical profile and repute of Iman Bibars".[413]

In order to consolidate the stature of Bibars and such NDP leaders as the benevolent and philanthropic patrons of the Misr Al Qadima community, some linkage between the social services provided by their NGOs and their political roles as the leaders of the community has to be established. Initially, working within the milieu of ADEW allowed people like Ahmed to broaden their communication skills and raised their awareness of the hardships faced by the community and how to confront them. The prime social service provided by the ADEW NGO was short and medium-term loans. By investigating the case-studies of the people that were granted loans, Ahmed and her entourage worked with the people of the area closely and got to know a fair deal about the social and economic statuses of the people of the community and the areas in which they are most in need of assistance and support. Subsequently, when Bibars entered the political scene her repute was already well-established as the benevolent notable. By entering the political arena, Bibars was also capable of serving the community further by occupying an official role in the decision-making circles, mainly the NDP for this purpose. By and large, the "Misr Al Qadima community is politicized and comparatively materialistic, which meant that the scope of services provided to it by the political patron

[413] Interview with Madiha Ahmed, June 14th 2008.

would not go unnoticed and would, to a large extent, determine the degree of popularity and appeal enjoyed by this political patron. Our district is mostly a poor one, which makes this mode of services of crucial importance for the people."[414]

In the course of this patronage network, a wide array of services was provided to the people of the area:

> We would provide the people with pretty much anything that our budget could afford, depending on the financial resources allocated by the NGO or the patron him/herself. If you are to establish a reputation as the patron in a popular area like Misr Al Qadima, you have to meet the expectations of the locals. For example, when I was working with the NGOs that were primarily concerned with women's affairs, we used to get requests from the women of our district to obtain all kinds of things for them, ranging from stoves and ovens and all varieties of home appliances to educational loans, employment opportunities, and works of restoration and renovation in their homes. We were quite successful in meeting most of these demands, which, in the case of Bibars, added up to her credibility and popularity.[415]

In addition to the acquisition of the resources and services endowed by the patrons to the respective clients, another crucial factor that also plays an important role in consolidating the sociopolitical prowess of such patrons is their interconnectedness with the intermediaries; the lesser notabilities that are likely to broaden their patron-client networks, ensuring the delivery and distribution of these services and resources among the populace.

Lesser Notables: Infiltrating through to them, features of their profile and their role in elections

The notables here are mostly influential figures within the big families (clans) of the area. This area (Manial and Masr Al Qadima) has witnessed a massive overflow of

[414] Ibid

[415] Ibid

immigrants coming from Upper Egypt over the past three decades or so, and currently those that originally stem from the Misr Al Qadima/Manial, dating back to their grandfathers or older generations, are considered by those coming from Upper Egypt as Cairenes (*Masarwa*). This divide was indeed present and it affected to a great extent the way those extended families lobbied and voted in the elections. There is usually a severe competition over the votes of those big families between the candidates, because their votes come in bulk and they are more likely to vote than their Cairene counterparts, given their dire socio-economic statuses, and their need for the benefits reaped from partaking in the voting process.[416]

The *kbir el `ela* (family notable) is capable of directing the votes due to his respectable status within the family and, accordingly, his community. The notable would take a certain amount of money in accordance with the number of votes he is expected to generate. These notables are generally involved with commercial activities; they are usually merchants and intermediaries of food supplies, cement, appliances…etc. Both the social and the economic factors combine to determine the degree of influence and power possessed by the notables. The financial aspect helps them elevate their status within their families and communities by dispensing the resources needed to the people of their family and community and also by pulling lots of strings with the state authorities. "It is no secret to reveal that there is an immense amount of corruption and bribery going on within the various state authorities, including of course the security apparatus, and having the financial capabilities help create strong ties with the police." On the other hand, the social aspect also help pivot the economic profile of the notable, boosting his reputation

[416] Interview with Magued Hamman, June 14th 2008

as a respectable and a trustworthy merchant, and providing him with the networks needed to market his merchandise.[417]

In recent years the state has started to realize the importance of co-opting those figures of lesser notability and the crucial roles they play in local politics:

> Look at the most recent municipal elections in 2008. The majority of those that were pushed forward by the NDP belonged to this category…Mostly illiterate or poorly educated local notables. They are the ones getting things done on the local/popular echelons, given their entrenchment within the community on the grassroots level, and their ability to capitalize upon the social networks they possess for the benefit of the party. For the popular *kbir* (notables) also, being in the MC is a great success that one should aspire for…It gives them social honor and prestige, and for someone with such a socio-economic profile, this is a very important achievement that can't be overlooked.[418]

According to several NDP-affiliated respondents, the role of the lesser notabilities was also apparent in the 2007 supplementary elections that brought Allam to the parliament, where they somewhat succeeded in making a name for this virtually unknown figure in Misr Al Qadima over a relatively short period of time.

Alliances and interactions between the lesser notabilities and the NDP patrons

Hence, the lesser notabilities are indeed quite pivotal for the purpose of networking and gaining support on the grassroots level for NDP patrons like Bibars or Allam. Usually, different lesser notabilities are co-opted by different patrons, and the reasons why certain lesser notables collude with certain patrons vary from case to case. For instance, Hajj Gad Megahed[419] collaborated with NDP tycoons, Mamdouh Thabet Mekky and Ragab Mawhoub. Perhaps Mawhoub had a stronger allegiance with him as

[417] Ibid
[418] Ibid
[419] Hajj Gad Megahed's profile was introduced earlier in Chapter IV; he is one of the most powerful lesser notabilities in Misr Al Qadima

they both belong to same *Sai'di* (Upper Egyptian) province; Sohag. Bibars was relatively new to the area, when compared to these well-established old-guards of the NDP, who have implanted their networks of support for decades. Therefore, getting through to these lesser notables was like a dream for people like Ahmed or Hammam; as campaigners of parliamentary candidates. People like Megahed control and direct a lot of votes, and they have a certain pricing for that in accordance with the amount of votes they could direct for one MP candidate or another. Indeed, Ahmed cites that, in the course of Bibars' campaign for instance, the crew succeeded in reaching some of them and gathered with them, introducing their plan and program of action for the development of the area. But the soundness of their development profiles was not exactly what such notables would be interested in the most. It was rather, of course, the amount of resources that could be dispersed to them, as opposed to the other political actors in the community. "Let alone the fact that our candidate was also a woman, which somehow affected the way such people, usually with very traditional perspectives on the role that should be played by women within the public sphere, received our campaign."[420]

Despite the sound impact that Bibars and several other NDP patrons had on the popular level via the multitude of services that they provided, it was rather apparent also that, on the higher echelons of the NDP, they were not still as influential as the old-guard of the party, which is often more capable of entrenching through the state institutions: ministries, police apparatuses…etc. Yet, most of the new-guard patrons would still attempt to infiltrate those entities that are seemingly more supportive to the old-guard, such as the police stations or the NDP Party Units:

[420] Interview with Madiha Ahmed, June 14th 2008

> As intermediaries, we try to get through to these entities: sometimes through gifts of all sorts to the officers and policemen of the police station, and sometimes via offering funds to renovate or redecorate the headquarters of the station, and so forth. We also exerted a lot of effort in keeping our ties with the key-figures in the local Party Unit. But the problem was, more often than not, it was rather vague and difficult to pinpoint whether a certain person or office is on your side or not. They could accept the endowments and gifts that we provide pleasantly and help us out with some issues or permits when needed, but then comes the time of the elections and things get clearer.[421]

Thus, in spite of the attempts made to win the police apparatus over, it has been almost a pattern that the police would firmly support the candidates associated with the NDP old-guard clique.

Lesser notabilities against Bibars in 2007

Despite the fact that the state apparatus, spearheaded by Ezz, was not in favor of Bibars taking the parliamentary seat in accordance with the will of Al Naggar, there had to a certain façade to cover up for the process. In the elections, an unprecedented degree of forgery and manipulation was maintained to block any potential votes from getting through to Bibars. This electoral district has an estimate of 120,000 registered votes and typically only 20,000 to 25,000 out of those, end up voting. This time around the opposing candidate, Magdy Allam, won the elections with 14,000 votes. This was practically unreasonable, given that throughout the history of the district, the average number of votes that went for the winner was always between 4000-5000 votes.[422] The police did everything possible to prevent anyone from voting in the first place, knowing that the votes will be most likely not in the favor of their preferable candidate. The notables of the area, mainly co-opted by the old-guard cadres of the NDP, were also

[421] Ibid
[422] Interviews with Iman Bibars and Magdy Allam's elections campaigners, March and April 2008

pivotal in this scheme. They helped spread negative rumors against Bibars among the populace, and, utilizing their influence, discouraged a lot of people from voting for her. Also, Allam himself (The victor MP) was quite successful in getting through to the notables as well with the help of the NDP Party Unit, and certain promises were given regarding positions in the local MCs for the notables that would support him. This was in fact actualized in the 2008 municipal elections which, as mentioned earlier, brought forward a good number of the old guard-affiliated lesser notabilities as members of the local MC.[423]

The NDP and notabilities of minorities: The females and the Copts: A success story for lesser notability in Misr Al Qadima?

The state apparatuses and the Copts post 1952

As displayed in previous sections of this chapter, it is rather safe to assume that, at various junctures, the NDP has been keen on utilizing different kinds of notabilities to serve the best interest of the party within the popular quarters. A question of relevance here would be; to what extent has the NDP utilized certain lesser notabilities to increase its popularity and infiltrate through the minorities' communities in Egypt? Namely, minorities such as the Copts (Ethnic Egyptian Christians) and, to an extent also, the female population of Egypt, which could also be considered as conceptual minority, albeit not necessarily a numerical one, have always been on the agenda of the higher echelons of the party, one way or another, and the aim here is to shed some light on the practicalities of these proclaimed NDP policies. But first we have to clarify where the

[423] Interview with Magued Hammam, June 14th 2008

NDP stands from the Coptic issue in the first place and whether there is a particular clear-cut policy or strategy that the party is following in this regard.

Some analysts view that the Coptic dilemma within the Egyptian state had its roots in the post 1952 phase. The initial features of this dilemma and potential discrimination were the establishment of state-sponsored media outlets, as the Holy Quran Radio Station in the 1960s. Then the alteration of Al Azhar from a sheer religious institution into an all encompassing religious/secular educational institution that also endorses natural and social sciences education, producing – supposedly - civic professionals in the various walks of life, yet with a rigid Islamic background, was another cornerstone in the policies of the state at the time. Such policies sponsored by the state were not paralleled with similar initiatives towards Copts. The cooptation of Egypt's largest Islamic institution, Al Azhar, along with the state sponsorship of a wide variety of media and cultural ventures and venues that were by default exclusively Islamic, meant that the state was clearly more biased towards its Muslim population and against the Copts.[424]

Of course, these were just preliminary features of state biases, but then with the robust ascent of political Islamism in the Sadat phase, the Coptic dilemma took a new turn and, at least initially when the Sadat regime was sympathetic with and sometimes supportive of the Islamists as a potential political counterbalance to secular opposition, the insecurities and estrangement of sizable segments of the Coptic population were rather solidified. Throughout most of the Mubarak phase (1981-present), the status quo of the Copts has been more or less stagnant. President Hosni Mubarak has ensured,

[424] Interview with Kamal Zakher, Coptic intellectual and activist, May 6th, 2008. Zakher is a Coptic activist and intellectual who writes and mobilizes about issues pertaining to the rights of the Coptic minority in Egypt. He originates from Assiut, where he was born in 1949.

however, to keep strong ties with the Coptic religious institution, represented by the Alexandrian Patriarchy. Pope Shenouda III is widely perceived as an independent and integral yet regime-friendly figure of religious authority.[425]

The NDP and the Copts

Today, on aggregate, for the majority of the Coptic population of Egypt, The NDP might seem as the best political option available, in terms of a ruling party. When compared to the biases inherent within the political platform of the MB against the Copts, the seemingly loose, yet predominantly secular agenda of the NDP, makes it the only viable politically organized entity with no discrimination agendas against Copts, women...etc. However, it could be still argued that the Coptic issue is not on top of the list of priorities of the NDP.[426] With regard to the particular benefits that the Copts have reaped throughout the reign of the NDP, Youssef Sidhom, Coptic activist and journalist, says, "Not much. Perhaps the National Council for Human Rights could be cited as a success, where it, despite being an offshoot of the ruling party, outlined a few of the atrocities practiced against minorities by some state institutions, particularly by the security apparatus. The NDP is potentially capable of empowering the Coptic population further but, thus far, it hasn't pursued a robust agenda or a clear-cut policy that empowers the Copts"[427].

Indeed the reasons for the NDP not proceeding further with Coptic empowerment vary. Sometimes it is to appease the Islamists by showing its apathy towards the Coptic

[425] Ibid

[426] Interview with Youssef Sidhom, editor of Watany Newspaper, April 23rd, 2008

[427] Ibid

demands, and in some other contexts it is to withhold some of the benefits that could be given to the Copts in order to play stick-and-carrot with the Coptic population and utilize these benefits as potential incentives and privileges to be endowed by the regime upon the Copts, when needed. An example of this is the Unified Law for Places of Worship, which grants the Copts equal rights of building churches as the Muslims who can much more easily secure permits for constructing mosques, pretty much anywhere possible. Such permits are hardly given to Copts, and the whole issue of building new churches has been exposed to some severe restrictions imposed by the state, almost since 1952. The draft of this aforementioned law has been proposed for over 30 years now and it could have been easily passed by the NDP majority in the parliament if it was willing to pursue the issue, yet this has not taken place until today[428].

The NDP and the political participation/representation of Copts

Arguably, one of the main disparities existent concerning the status of the Copts in Egypt relates to the spectrum of their political participation and representation. Despite the fact that Copts constitute almost 9 percent of the total population of Egypt, this was by no means reflected in the number of Christian candidates running in the parliamentary elections held over the past decade or so. In the 1995, 2000, and 2005 parliamentary elections, Christians constituted 1.4, 1.8, and 1.5 percent of the total candidates respectively. Apparently, these ratios do not reflect the actual portion they represent within the Egyptian society.[429]

[428] Ibid

[429]Samer Soliman (2006). *Political Participation in the 2005 Parliamentary Elections*. Cairo: The Egyptian Association for Community Participation Enhancement. p. 49

It is yet to be verified whether Gamal Mubarak and his new-guard NDP faction are willing to or capable of altering this stagnancy which has characterized the approach of the NDP towards the Coptic population, "There is a grey zone where we can not foresee the future when we look at these businessmen and the neoliberal policies that are being currently adopted by the state. The most recent municipal elections were a disappointment. The slogans of minority empowerment championed by the NDP were not exercised whatsoever."[430] In fact a few years ago, with the ascent of the new-guard group within the NDP, there seemed to be a growing tendency among Copts to join the ranks of the NDP- more in the rural areas and the out-of-Cairo governorates than in Cairo itself- yet the result was a severe blow to the aspirations of those newly recruited members. Indeed a lot of Copts and women were banned from running in the 2007/2008 municipal elections, whether as independent candidates or as NDP affiliates, in favor of other figures that were desired by the party. Such figures were chosen by the party because they were considered more trustworthy than the newcomers, which meant that they were more reliable in terms of executing the policies that the NDP mandates.[431]

There are instances however where local political figures succeeded in utilizing the NDP to attain benefits for the Coptic population within low-income popular communities. Youssef Boutros Ghali, currently Egypt's finance minister, is one of these examples. Ghali is by no means a lesser notability as he comes from a very affluent and politically powerful Coptic family-his uncle is the UN's Former Secretary General Boutros Ghali- yet as an NDP member, he served his locality in the popular district of Shobra very well. Due to his status and closeness to the decision-making circles, namely

[430] Interview with Youssef Sidhom, editor of Watany Newspaper, April 23rd, 2008

[431] Ibid and Interviews with NDP cadres. Cairo, July 2008

President Hosni Mubarak himself, Ghali enjoyed a privileged position in the realm of the NDP. In Shobra, he secured a lot of services to the locality. This was actualized via providing job opportunities for the people of the area in the Ministry of Finance and other ministries, building new schools and establishing public parks and other recreational facilities in the district. [432]

Coptic lesser notabilities in Misr Al Qadima

As displayed earlier, the NDP is, in many senses, an extension of the single party establishments that came into being post 1952. On the grassroots level, those in charge of the local Party Units or within the MCs were either the exact same faces or the sons of those that held the leading positions in the ASU in the 1960s. It is in this light that the party has dealt with the Coptic leaderships on the popular level, in order to guarantee their loyalty to the regime. In Misr Al Qadima, one finds that there are a few Coptic families who have been involved with the NDP since the days of its ASU predecessor. For example, Mehanna Al Sohagy is the son of Habib Al Sohagy, a previous ASU/NDP notable/MC member. Mehanna is currently a MC member as well.[433]

Another example of a Coptic Lesser Notable is Khaled Abdelmalak who represents a good case for the marriage between business and politics. Like many other examples of middle-level businessmen that aspire to ally with the NDP to enhance their business prospects, Abdelmalak probably entered the party with the hope that such entry will elevate his business profile, being a middle-ranking businessman in the area. His NGO, *Amal* Society, provides services to the people on non-sectarian basis. Social

[432] Interviews with Shobra residents and field visits to Shobra, Cairo, June 2008
[433] Interview with Kamal Zakher, May 6th, 2008

services, vocational trainings, and employment opportunities are amongst some of the benefits that are channeled by Abdelmalak to the people. Subsequently, he succeeded in developing a very good repute for himself in the area and won a seat in the 2008 MC as an NDP candidate. Abdelmalak is in fact the only Copt in Misr Al Qadima's MC today, and reckons that, had not it been for the NDP support that he had in his electoral campaign and the wide scope of social services and activities that he orchestrates in the area, he would not have made it through to the MC. This is attributed to the animosity and sometimes anti-campaigning practiced against him by some powerful political Islamists in the community.[434]

Female lesser notabilities of Misr Al Qadima…Jamilla Abdelmajid: A success story?

In the course of this chapter there were a few examples of NDP-associated female notabilities that have played a multitude of sociopolitical roles in the polity of Misr Al Qadima, including figures like Bibars and Al Sa`idi. Whereas the former did not really belong to the category of lesser notability, the latter, despite having the socioeconomic and political features that fit the lesser notable profile, was largely unsuccessful in competing with other lesser notabilities in the area due to a plethora of factors, elaborated upon earlier. The case of Jamilla Abdelmajid poses, however, an example of a female lesser notability who was, by and large, successful in cultivating an entrenched web of social and political networks within Misr Al Qadima, subsequently succeeding in becoming one of the most influential NDP figures on the popular level in the area, and winning herself a seat in the 2008 MC as well. Abdelmajid comes from a relatively

[434] Interview with Khaled Abdelmalak, May 13th, 2008

humble working-class background; her mother was a housewife who did not work out of the house and her father was a laborer in a local factory. Both of her parents were illiterate, and in fact Abdelmajid herself can barely read and write Arabic. However, Abdelmajid attests that, despite the simple background of her parents, they were still ardent believers in the Nasserite project of Arab Socialism. Abdelmajid is a full-time politician; she is a member of the NDP's local Women's Secretariat and takes pride in the fact that her main source of income comes from the allocations she obtains from the NDP Party Unit and the local MC, as this means that she makes a living out of the thing she treasures the most, which is "serving her people"[435].

The scope of activities of Abdelmajid with the NDP is quite rich. The primary post she holds within the party is her membership in the Women's Secretariat:

> One of the main duties of the Secretariat is to get specialized aid to women in all walks of life on the level of the governorate. Female doctors, lawyers…etc. are responsible for raising awareness among the women of the area. In the most recent municipal elections, political awareness had to be raised among the citizens of `Ain Al Sirra and Misr Al Qadima proper. Women voters and candidates were trained to know more about their rights and duties in the electoral process. In September of every year, the annual plan of the party is put and we start our activities accordingly. Educational services, illiteracy workshops, small and medium sized health clinics, vocational training courses and small and medium loans are among the main services that we provide to our community members. These issues constitute the main pillars of attention for this party committee and it is done in partnership with a variety of local NGOs and businessmen.[436]

An example of such aforementioned NGOs is the Mekky NGO, run by NDP strongman/businessman Mamdouh Mekky. Such organizations are sometimes also utilized by various lesser NDP figures, other than its owner or founder, in accordance with the alliances and networks that such lesser NDP figures maintain with those big

[435] Interview with Jamilla Abdelmajid, Misr Al Qadima, April 2008
[436] Ibid

NDP names. For the most part, Abdelmajid has been quite successful in sustaining a relatively sizable web of networks with the key NDP figures in the area, in addition also to strong ties with relevant state institutions; such as government ministries, security apparatuses…etc., which has subsequently facilitated her tasks as a local notability and an MC member.

Abdelmajid states that the success story that she is most proud of in the course of her sociopolitical activities is her "fruitful efforts in negotiating on behalf of 200 workers of the Electricity Holding Company to get their jobs back after being sacked and given a minimal amount of money for retirement that could have only met their living expenses for a couple of months." Within less than a week, she got the demands of those workers met and secured their jobs back. Abdelmajid was successful in lobbying with the relevant ministries and drafted formal memos to the State Security, the Prime Minister, and the Presidency. She said that the intense level of her involvement in the issue could have reached the degree of antagonizing the people higher up in the company to take some action against her, possibly threatening her or her family with harm if she does not withhold her efforts in the case, yet Abdelmajid said she was not really afraid as it was a very worthy venture as she thought. "Those people were very simple workers mostly and they were in very dire need…Getting these jobs back had to be accomplished. Ultimately, the company agreed to return them to their jobs with better terms."[437]

Such incidents reveal that, as a lesser notability, Abdelmajid was more successful in attaining her objectives as an MC member and an influential NDP cadre, than, for example, Al Sa`idi, in spite of Al Sa`idi's seniority over her in the ranks of the NDP Women's Committee. The causes of these different degrees of success relate,

[437] Ibid

importantly, to the kind of alliances and networks that the lesser notability cultivates within his/her neighborhood and also the kind of opposition that he/she might face from lesser or other notabilities that are higher up in the party. As opposed to Abdelmajid, Al Sa`idi was not fortunate on both accounts as she was clearly unable of securing the needed networks and alliances that would enable her of infiltrating such state institutions as the government ministries or the police apparatus, and, at the same time, she was also faced with fierce competition/opposition form another very powerful NDP notable, Abdelhamid Shehata.

Conclusions: Patronage politics and the cooptation of the Lesser Notables: The prospects of the NDP in Cairo's popular quarters

The central party vis-à-vis the local Party Units and the power structures within the NDP

On aggregate, the local NDP Party Units are supposed to operate under the close scrutiny and guidance of the central authority of the party. However, it seems that the old-guard faction is more influential than the new-guard reformists in the ranks of these local units. As mentioned in the writing, on the central level, most of the NDP figures that have access to/knowledge of the ins and outs of the Party Units and the district-level operations happen to be old-guard sympathizers. The degree of autonomy of the local councils over their own affairs is quite limited, with the decisions regarding the financial allocations and administrative affairs of the MCs typically stemming from the central party. Additionally, virtually monopolizing the arena of issuing authorizations and permits for a wide variety of the everyday activities of the locals, the MCs could also be considered as the powerhouses that enable the NDP to exercise its power upon the

populace via bestowing certain advantages upon some individuals or groups. This turns the MCs into venues for rent-seeking activities undertaken by NDP officials and politicians. Such rent-seeking behavior often means that permits and authorizations would be issued at a certain price or in return for political allegiance and support during elections, for instance.

With the advent of Gamal Mubarak's new-guard, the local councils have been the prime target of the cooptation of the NDP. The main power structure that seems to be characterizing the ranks of the NDP today is this old-guard/new-guard dichotomy that exists between the reformist faction of Gamal Mubarak on one side and the old-guard cadres that have been in virtual domination over the party ever since its inception in 1976 and even prior - for some of those old cadres have also been involved in the other state-sponsored political organizations that preceded the NDP; the ASU…etc. - on the other. Within the ranks of the central party, the power struggle between these two forces is a happening reality. The new-guard is in control of the Policies Committee, chaired by Gamal Mubarak and responsible for outlining the politico-economic policies of the party and the different ministries on the macro-level. On the other hand, the old-guard faction is guided by a few key figures on the central level, and those figures, such as Safwat Sharif, the general secretary and Kamal Al Shazly the Organization Secretary, also hold multiple prime positions in the various central secretariats.

There is no unitary logic that would suggest that the old-guard cadres are always dominant on the local level whereas, on the central level, the new-guard is always more powerful. Tensions and competitions between these two main lines within the party do exist on various levels and also with regard to the interest groups that are linked to them,

i.e. in the realm of the business community. Yet, this research shows that it is rather safe to assume that, more often than not, the old-guard are more capable of influencing local politics than the new-guard. The reformist/new-guard interests and forces are not necessarily weak in Misr Al Qadima although some of the new-guard associated cadres did not actually succeed on the popular level. For example, interest groups, such as major businessmen and figures like Ahmed Ezz, have a strong say in the affairs of the polity however, again, the power structure/struggle that evolves, pretty much on case-by-case basis, is the main determinant that shapes the outcome of such potential tensions between various interest groups and key figures. In the case of Ezz, he succeeded in attaining his objectives concerning the elections, due to his prime position in the party and the extensive networks he maintains with the various state-institutions, such as the police apparatus. On the other hand, the sizable power that a figure like Ezz enjoys is not matched, for instance, by the other businessmen that were involved with the skin tannery factories, who were faced with strong oppositions when it came to the relocation of the skin tannery workshops.

This study reveals that, in the milieu of Misr Al Qadima and the other popular communities of Cairo, the lesser notabilities do not seem to harbor a particular preference for a certain NDP faction over the other. Lesser notabilities are nonetheless expected to cooperate and ally with those NDP figures that acknowledge their role as popular notables in the low-income communities, and, more often than not, those NDP cadres happen to be the old-guard affiliated cadres. As displayed in the cases of Bibars and Al Sa`idi in Misr Al Qadima, and in other cases all over Cairo as well, like in the case of

Hossam Badrawy, the prominent new-guard NDP cadre in the Qasr Al Nil district[438], the new-guard associated cadres who were unsuccessful in the 2005 parliamentary elections were, by and large, incapable of consolidating the scope of socioeconomic and political networks maintained by their old-guard affiliated counterparts. Despite the general tendency of most of the NDP-affiliated cadres to cooperate and ally with lesser notabilities, in some instances some new-guard figures would refuse to give weight to the role of lesser notabilities and other sociopolitical actors and would deliberately attempt to orchestrate their campaigns without allying with the popular notables of the community.[439]

The NDP's symbiotic relationship with lesser notabilities

As displayed in this chapter, ever since its inception as the state's ruling party in 1976, the NDP has been suffering from a severe detachment with the necessary popular/grassroots bases that would prospectively solidify its position in the popular polity vis-à-vis other political forces, particularly the MB and its affiliated ISIs. Hence, in order for it to establish and further consolidate its stature as a viable political actor in Cairo's popular quarters, the NDP has been adamant on utilizing the lesser notabilities, which have been thriving in these areas as influential sociopolitical figures for over three

[438] Interviews with Hisham Khalil and NDP cadres, May-June 2008. In 2005 the parliamentary seat in this district went to Hisham Khalil, whose ascent to the parliament poses an interesting case. He succeeded in winning his seat against Hossam Badrawy, one of the NDP's most powerful figures and a very close aide and consultant to Gamal Mubarak. Khalil was in fact supported by the old-guard figures of the NDP such as Kamal Shazly, who, in Qasr Al Nil as well as in a multitude of electoral circles all over Egypt, including Misr Al Qadima, were not fond of the idea of having the new-guard figures associated with Gamal Mubarak rise to prominence in the parliament.

[439] Interviews with NDP cadres, Cairo, June-July 2008; in fact some NDP members cited that, in the light of the reformist approach taken by the new-guard, the phenomenon of lesser notabilities was perceived by some of the new-guard cadres as a manifestation of corruption and illegitimate political practice that had to be eradicated.

decades or so, especially since the adoption of the Open Door policies in the Sadat phase. In Misr Al Qadima as well as in a multitude of other popular quarters in Cairo and elsewhere in Egypt, the MCs have served as a prime locale for creating the necessary alliances with those lesser notabilities, which now constitute the majority of the MC members and administrators, especially in the post-2005 phase which witnessed a surge in the attention given by the NDP to the MCs. This cooptation of lesser notabilities has ensured their loyalty to the ruling party, and guaranteed the NDP a venue that would, with relative ease, administer the affairs of the popular quarter in line with the guidelines of the NDP. At the same time, the MCs also provide the ruling party with an excellent setting for distributing resources and services among the populace of the popular quarters.

In Misr Al Qadima, the NDP has succeeded in co-opting various lesser notabilities into its ranks. A chief factor that has affected the ability of certain lesser notabilities to ascend within the ranks of the party has been their propensity to generate a web of networks within the influential state institutions in the polity, namely the police apparatus and a wide variety of government ministries, such as, education, health, infrastructure, and so forth. Additionally, the lesser notabilities that have maintained a scope of sound networks and alliances with the big families of the area have also succeeded in pivoting their socioeconomic and political profiles further, especially in `Ain Al Sirra, where a sizable population of Upper Egyptian immigrants is present. The entrenchment within/influence upon these big families is crucial for the NDP, particularly during the time of elections, when regional solidarity and traditional authority within the

big family/clan can help direct tens of thousands of votes towards one candidate or another.

The lesser notabilities of Misr Al Qadima play an essential role also as intermediaries between other categories of notables on the higher echelons of the polity and the grassroots basis on the popular level. In order for this relationship to be attained, an amalgam of patron-client networks has to be instated to ensure that the dissemination of resources, from the notable on the higher echelons to the lower strata within the popular community, takes place. For the most part, the older generation of the NDP leaderships, referred to in the course of this chapter as the old-guard, has been by far more successful in playing political patronage in Misr Al Qadima, as opposed to the new-guard represented by Gamal Mubarak and his neo-liberal entourage. The new-guard generation of the NDP has been predominantly incapable of cultivating the sort of clientelist networks necessary for entrenching within the popular polity, as illustrated in the case of Bibars. In spite of holding a prime position in the party as a Political Bureau member, Bibars was yet incapable of mastering the sort of expertise that would enable her to infiltrate through the various state institutions, as opposed to the categories of lesser notabilities who are often better equipped to infiltrate the popular communities as well as the state institutions. Particularly, institutions such as the police apparatus play an essential role in the political processes of the popular communities, as was observed in the 2007 elections which witnessed some abrupt intervention from the police authorities for the benefit of the other NDP candidate, Allam. In fact, this old-guard/new-guard dichotomy was also existent in other electoral circles in Cairo, and similar pro-old guard scenarios also took place.

The new-guard/old-guard divide and the cooptation of the MCs

As stated earlier, there seems to be a realization among the new-guard that there needs to be a sounder connectedness with the grassroots basis and that this could be achieved via the consolidation of local governance entities, such as the municipalities. However, in spite of the general detachment with the lower echelons of the polity which has characterized the dealings of the old guard-controlled NDP with such strata for decades, the old-guard cadres could still be considered as the ones who are more capable of attaining this scheme of consolidation, due to the sizable scope of patron-client networks that they have cultivated within the polity over the years. Here, it is important to point-out that possessing and further orchestrating these interconnected webs of political patronage, which the old-guard have maintained for decades, does not necessarily reflect the old-guard's conviction in the importance of the MCs and their prospective role as powerbases for the NDP on the lower echelons. Instead, what the old-guard appears to be doing in the course of these recent, so-called, pro-decentralization reforms which were mainly instated by Gamal Mubarak and the new-guard cadres is capturing the opportunity to cling back to the circle of influence and decision-making processes in the NDP via attempting to hijack this aspired process of revitalization of the municipalities. This is actualized by virtue of those old-guard cadres being the arm of the NDP that is most capable of dealing with the lower echelons of the Cairene polity.

So, why is Gamal Mubarak pushing for reviving the municipalities if he is at odds with the old-guards who are stronger at the local level? Perhaps the new-guard cadres were driven by their firm conviction that decentralization attained via the empowerment of municipalities is a vital policy option. The execution of this policy along with a

possible underestimation of the power and influence of the old-guard on the ground, especially in the popular quarters, led to the standpoint that this research attempts to analyze. The findings here relate to the impact of these policies on the ground and how they were met by the various sociopolitical stakeholders in the popular polity, and it is quite probable that the new-guard would respond with a set of policies in order to offset the prowess of the old-guard on the local level, but this is yet to be observed.

On aggregate, it could be argued that, just as it has been in the case of the MB, the NDP has been also dependent on an amalgamation of patron-client networks that aim at co-opting lesser notabilities and other sorts of societal actors in order to infiltrate the Cairene popular quarter; and Misr Al Qadima is a vivid example of that. Unlike the MB which mainly operates in liaison with a wide scope of ISIs, the NDP, in addition to the NGOs that are virtually owned and operated by a wide of variety of its members and affiliates in the popular communities, also tends to utilize various state institutions to help disseminate resources and services among the populace. NDP-affiliated state apparatuses, such as the municipalities and the police, also provide the party with venues for exercising its power and influence over the populace Out of those institutions; the MCs stand out as an essential venue for politico-economic cooptation. Despite its relatively late arrival on the scene of popular political patronage, as opposed to the ISIs which have been operational in Cairo's popular quarters for decades, the NDP seems to be gradually competing with the MB and other politically Islamist forces in the realm of social services. To this end, Misr Al Qadima could be yet considered as an open ground for this ongoing competition between these two political forces, and thus far there appears to be no decisive domination for one of them over the other.

Lesser notabilities…Why politics?

This chapter also argues that, overall, there is no evidence for a unitary logic that explains why the Lesser Notable chooses to enter the realm of politics in Cairo's popular quarters. In fact, in the cases of a good portion of the lesser notabilities that this study has attempted to scrutinize, there were not that many options that a Lesser Notable could choose from with regard to his/her role in the community, yet the reasons for the involvement of the Lesser Notable in politics vary. For example, Hajj Najar from the NDP Services Office and Hajj Khaled Abdelfattah from the Misr Al Qadima MC both virtually inherited their roles as community notabilities from their fathers. Other lesser notabilities such as Hannan Al Sa`idi and Jamilla Abdelmajid had their own aspirations concerning their empowerment as female societal leaders and politicians and both, especially Abdelmajid, profiteered from their NDP association. The financial aspect also plays an essential role with lesser notabilities such as Abdelhamid Shehata who reportedly makes hundreds of thousands of pounds for the votes that he helps secure at election time.

Chapter VI: Conclusions: The NDP vs. The MB: Reflections on the sociopolitical agency and the Prospective Role of Lesser Notabilities in the Egyptian Polity[440]

Essentiality of the role of lesser notabilities in popular politics: NDP vs. MB

It could be argued that the competition over establishing alliances with lesser notabilities is one of the main pillars of the ongoing struggle between the NDP and the MB over the soul of Cairo's popular quarters. As displayed in the previous chapters, the Lesser Notable plays an important role in determining electoral outcomes, administering local affairs, and even affecting the street popularity and appeal of the NDP and the MB, on the grassroots level. This chapter aims at drawing a multiplicity of findings and conclusions regarding the role of lesser notabilities in the popular polities of Cairo and the subsequent prospective scenarios concerning the success of NDP versus the MB in allying with this category of sociopolitical leaderships.

The flexibility of the NDP platform, its cooptation machine and the new-guard/old-guard divide

More often than not, in the case of the NDP, the absence of a rigid party platform has helped in broadening the kind of sociopolitical bases co-opted by the ruling party. This gives the NDP more flexibility; for instance, as it enjoys the versatility of cooperating with a wide scope of collaborates from different or even sometimes conflicting backgrounds and convictions. In doing so, the NDP has been mostly focusing on collaborating with societal figures such as the lesser notabilities in order to utilize the

[440] It is hereby important to note that, as this thesis unfolded, it has become increasingly concerned with the role of lesser notabilities in formal party and electoral politics. As shall be discussed later in this chapter, this is attributed to the importance of the Lesser Notable establishing networks and symbiotic relationships with various state institutions in order for him/her to actualize his/her role properly in the popular community as a mediator, arbitrator, powerful figure of authority, distributor of resources…etc.

wide scope of networks and the moral and physical power and influence such figures possess over the families and clans of the popular polity. As stated in Chapter V, today several segments within the NDP are becoming gradually incapable of getting through to such figures, which reflects the increasing detachment from the realities of the polities that the party is supposed to be operating within.

At first instance, some might partially attribute this detachment to the old-guard of the NDP, which is, presumably, growing increasingly weaker due to its lack of touch with the popular powerbases, making way to the new-guard of Gamal Mubarak and his neo-liberal policies. Yet, the new-guard appears to be only strong enough at the top/central level of the party and, as these policies reach the lower/local levels, the old-guard appears to be more powerful and therefore capable of implementing such policies in the way that best serves its interests. This was shown in the case of the MCs in Chapter V, where the old-guard was capable of virtually manipulating the process of promoting decentralization via reforming the MCs.

In practical terms, the old-guard has been tactically savvy when it comes to the game of political patronage in comparison to the new-guard. It is in fact the lack of experience and inability of the newer NDP generations to infiltrate through the popular echelons that has caused the already-existing detachment between the NDP and the popular echelons to increase even further. On the ideological level also, some of the new-guard of the NDP do not seem to have the conviction that the strategies maintained by the old-guard cadres for decades with regard to political patronage are in fact fruitful. As shown in more than one case in Chapter V, one notes that the new-guard's neoliberal project is characterized with an overall rejection of the macro-level conceptualization of

the state as a welfare entity, along with a subsequent negligence of the importance of infiltrating through to the grassroots levels of the community. The ideas and discourses of the new-guard of the NDP towards the disenfranchised classes and quarters of popular Cairo are best shown in the already ongoing reform programs which they champion, calling for a considerable reduction in the role and size of the welfare-state project.

The exemplar cases of Iman Bibars and Hannan Al Saidi, among others, as cited in the course of Chapter V, reveal that the new-guard of the NDP has been, by and large, unsuccessful in infiltrating through to the grassroots bases in Cairo's popular quarters, particularly with regard to political patronage and electoral scheming. As mentioned, the macro-level worldview of such new-guard cadres differs from their old-guard counterparts and this is reflected in the way they perceive the role of the state on the local level and, subsequently, the policies they employ in dealing with the popular polity. For example, Bibars and Al Saidi appear to be quite critical of the role of the lesser notabilities in administering the affairs of the popular polity, yet Bibars attempted to collaborate with various lesser notables in order to pivot her electoral campaign. As a figure of leadership in the elite circles of the NDP and the local polity, Bibars viewed the rise of such figures of lesser notabilities to the forefront of socioeconomic and political arenas as a negative feature of social change, primarily due to the fact that they usually come from humble socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. For her, the educated and the elite should claim their position and play the main role in leading the community. Nonetheless, Bibars' campaigners acknowledged the prime role lesser notabilities play in the popular polity and thought it was important to collaborate with such notabilities in

order for their electoral campaign to succeed. Al Saidi also attempted to collaborate with popular notables as shall be discussed in the upcoming section of this chapter.

As stated in Chapter V, in spite of the negative perception they hold regarding popular notables, some NDP cadres are sometimes willing, albeit not necessarily able, to utilize lesser notabilities to serve their political aspirations. However, these seemingly seasonal attempts of establishing relationships and networks with lesser notabilities have proven to be unsuccessful in consolidating a scope of sound ties with local notables, compared to the ongoing and relatively more well-established networks culminated by some NDP old-guard figures, for example.

In short, one of the main reasons behind the failure of the new-guard in popular politics could be attributed to the fact that, quite often, these NDP cadres have been incapable of collaborating with political intermediaries such as the lesser notabilities. As shown earlier in chapters IV and V, these notabilities indeed play a tremendous role in either enhancing the prospects of a parliamentary or a municipal candidate or, oppositely, offsetting the chances of another. On the other hand, the MB and its affiliated ISIs have been considerably more successful in the realm of cooptation of lesser notabilities, thanks to the extensive webs of patron-client networks that they orchestrate and that, by default, require the presence of intermediary agents as such to ensure the consolidation of these patronage networks. The success that the MB and its affiliated ISIs have met in delivering much-needed resources and services to the popular quarters has been predominantly unmatched by the NDP, especially in the light of the incremental reduction in the social welfare services provided by state-institutions.[441]

[441] On aggregate, the disengagement of the state from the arena of social and economic services is manifested in the virtual elimination of subsidies on food stuffs and other basic goods, the increasing

Attempts at political mobilization portrayed as independent of lesser notabilities: Evaluating the experiment of the New Fostat NGO

Given the eminent role of lesser notabilities in the popular polity of Misr Al Qadima, are there any potentialities for some sort of political action/mobilization to take place independent of the intervention of such lesser notabilities? As reviewed in previous sections of this research, most of the political activities that took place in the popular neighborhood, independent of or in opposition to the politically active lesser notabilities were predominantly doomed to failure. However in some cases, alternative quasi-political entities, such as some NGOs, have claimed to pioneer certain attempts that aim at creating an alternative scheme of political mobilization that is not predominantly dependent on the intermediary roles of prominent lesser notabilities. A case in a point here is the New Fostat's project which aimed to raise the level of participation of various segments of the Misr Al Qadima populace in the formal venues of political participation, i.e. parliamentary and municipal elections…etc. Could such attempts at raising the level of public political awareness of/participation in the 'official' institutional venues/outlets of the state in such areas be considered as successful venture for counterbalancing the dominant role of lesser notabilities?

The project that was pioneered by the New Fostat NGO, and which was based on a study that was undertaken on Misr Qadima, could be considered as a pilot project. The basic rationale behind the project, labeled as the Political Awareness Campaign, is quite straightforward and it depended on selecting a group of cadres that would operate as a starting point and a nucleus for the project within the community. These cadres were then

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informalisation of the economy and the ongoing privatization of the public sector. See Chapter III, pages 103-113, for an overview of the features of state disengagement from the arena of social and economic services to the low-income communities.

educated and trained by the NGO to be proactively aware political participants, mainly via organized workshops, seminars and activities within their areas (election monitoring…etc). After completing their training program they were then responsible for recruiting ten more cadres each and these newly added cadres were to join the same scheme of activities and so forth, until a sizable network of a tentative 1,000 societal cadres was created. Initially, the process of selection of these cadres was quite crucial because by default of being societal leaders, those recruits were supposed to occupy certain social roles that enable them to communicate and connect with the inhabitants within their community. So far, the experiment of the New Fostat has been considerably successful in rooting and further spreading a group of cadres, who are considerably aware of the political realities of their area. These cadres were also willing and able to participate in the 'formal' political processes and they spread awareness among the populace concerning the official venues of political participation.[442]

Both Ms. Faten and Mr. Abdou have been involved in extensive fieldwork as executives of the Political Awareness Campaign instrumented by the New Fostat NGO. In fact, this program and the resultant findings provide us with some insightful observations regarding the social and political backgrounds of the inhabitants of the Misr Al Qadima/Manial area.[443] Additionally, the accounts of those fieldworkers and the observations they came out with in the context of their interaction with the locals of the area are quite revealing when it comes to the machinations of this campaign.[444] Ms. Faten

[442] Interviews with Khaled Abdelfattah, Researcher and Urban Politics Specialist, Cairo, July 2008.

[443] Look Chapter III for a detailed overview of the proceedings and findings of this study.

[444] Interviews with Ms. Faten & Mr. Abdou, New Fostat NGO, Misr Qadima, Cairo, June 2008.

and Mr. Abdou both emphasized upon the importance of the role of the "natural cadres" and stressed that they were, by and large, pivotal in the proceedings of the project:

"The role of the natural cadres was vital...Within an area like Misr Al Qadima, societal ties and networks are crucial if we are to get through to the various echelons of the society. Those cadres were then prudently trained to deal with the locals, in a manner that is quite similar to the way social workers are trained". However the additive those cadres have is the fact that they belong to the areas they work within and are, subsequently, well acquainted with these areas and the people that dwell there.[445] Hence, such "natural cadres" played a role that was, in sorts, similar to that of the Lesser Notables, being the intermediary sociopolitical agents that connect with and between the various echelons of the community and, at various junctures, participate in the formal/official political venues that are sanctioned by the modern state. And, in doing so, such sociopolitical figures play an essential role in bridging the gap between the state-sanctioned political processes and the social conditions and practices within the polity. Yet was there a particular socioeconomic profile for such "natural cadres"? And did they have certain political aspirations or ambitions that motivated them to pursue such a mission, provided that the financial incentives provided by the NGO were rather humble?[446]

[445] Ibid.

[446]In the narratives of the social workers of the Political Awareness Campaign, there was some resemblance between those natural cadres of leadership and the *biyitkabarluh* figures introduced earlier in chapters I and II. From the outset, the *biyitkabarluh* figure usually has an apolitical persona yet, as we have seen in various sections of this study, those figures are also potential targets for political cooptation stemming from the NDP or the MB and their affiliated organizations.

The practitioners involved in the program state that they tried their best to diversify these groups of cadres in terms of gender and age, and think that they succeeded in doing that, to an extent:

> There were a lot of middle aged men and women that got involved. I don't have the numbers…In order for us to select such natural cadres; those people had to have a certain social stature that would make their words heard by the people of the community. In other words, they had to have a certain position within the extended family or the neighborhood. This enabled the cadre to reach a sizable number of people who would, in return, most likely receive the actions of these cadres positively. Educational attainment was not necessarily a requirement; in fact most of them had a limited educational background. A lot of them performed some commercial activities within their neighborhoods as merchants, workshop owners…etc. Expectedly, some of them had some political ambition or at least an expectation that such an activity would enhance their social statuses as notabilities of sorts.[447]

The Political Awareness Campaign is considered by the New Fostat as a step forward in the context of social and political awareness in a popular area like Misr Al Qadima. Yet its aims and objectives do not appear to be purely neutral or developmental as stated by some of those involved in it. Furthermore, despite the proclaimed independence from the influence of lesser notabilities, the Political Awareness Campaign represents, in effect, an attempt to collaborate with a grouping of socioeconomic cadres that could be considered, after all, an amalgam of aspiring lesser notabilities that are looking for a political role to play in the Misr Al Qadima polity.

In accordance with the testimony of the social workers and researchers that conducted the preliminary case study which opened the door for this project to be launched, the program aimed at targeting a certain group of Misr Qadima locals (cadres) that could be potentially helpful in spreading awareness and networking, but who were

[447] Interviews with Ms. Faten & Mr. Abdou, New Fostat NGO, Misr Qadima, Cairo, June 2008.

also considered as a grouping that is loyal to Ms. Hannan Al Saidi. Al Saidi herself states that those cadres, along with several other beneficiaries of that project, were delegated with the task of monitoring the municipal elections only after she lost, or was forced to lose, due to the intervention of the police apparatus.[448] Despite its seemingly educational and awareness components spilling over to the community, the program was somehow designed and further utilized to serve some of the interests of its inceptor and the sponsoring NGO.

The Political Awareness Campaign could be considered as a potentially viable idea for enhancing the political awareness of some Misr Al Qadima locals. However, looking at this program for the purpose of this research, a few relevant observations could be drawn out concerning the relationship between the 'official' political leaderships, as Al Saidi, and the popular notabilities. Most importantly, the program and the scope of activities that it sponsors only confirm the findings stated in Chapter V concerning the NDP's cadres' utilization of arenas for seemingly apolitical socioeconomic services, such as NGOs, to serve their own benefits. Hannan Al Sa'idi, the very same NDP cadre that robustly opposed the utilization of the leading figures in the NDP and the MB for NGOs to attain personal political gain, has actually used the New Fostat NGO which she chairs for purposes that serve her best interest.[449]

[448]Look Chapter V for an elaborate discussion of Ms. Hannan Al Saidi's case and her attempts to launch a counter-campaign against some of the NDP old-guard cadres in Misr Qadima, utilizing her social networks in the area. Despite being an NDP member herself, Al Saidi was faced with some fierce opposition from within the NDP, especially in the course of the elections, primarily due to her new-guard affiliations.

[449]A multiplicity of the social workers and researchers that the writer has interviewed emphasized that the idea of a grassroots community-based political awareness program is arguably one of the very few potential remedies that could successfully tackle the issue of the lack of political participation and awareness in the popular quarters. Nonetheless, when scrutinized closely, one finds that the conditions under which such "remedies" and programs operate reflect its minimal success in meeting its claimed objectives of raising political awareness and participation impartially and independent of the influence and whims of powerful

In addition, such attempts at political mobilization further emphasize the essential role played by intermediaries of lesser notabilities in infiltrating through to the popular echelons of the polity. Although the Political Awareness Campaign had originally aimed at offsetting the sociopolitical prowess of the typical powerhouses of NDP and MB-based notability in the area, it was yet dependent on "natural cadres" of societal leaderships that were, by and large, lesser notabilities of sorts, in networking and reaching out to the populace.

The NDP's lesser notabilities and implications pertaining to state/society relations in the wider context of Cairo's popular quarters

The individual/state dichotomy and the state/lesser notabilities power struggle in the popular quarter

As displayed in the course of this study, in Misr Al Qadima the individual's loyalty to/conviction and realization of the goals and objectives of the ruling party and the state apparatus linked to it is, by and large, absent. The individual's basic needs of food stuffs, health care services…etc, are hardly met by such state apparatuses and, instead, the NDP and MB-affiliated NGOs and powerful patrons are now attempting to fill-in the gaps of the already diminishing role of the state. This is actualized with the aid of lesser notabilities and other categories of sociopolitical agents, which act as active sociopolitical actors that are capable of playing a multitude of social, economic and political roles. In short, the gradually waning role of state-institutions meant that the state had abdicated its responsibility as a welfare state. In this context the legitimacy and popular acquiescence of one political entity or another, be it the MB or the NDP, are

patrons and clients of lesser notabilities. The Political Awareness Program is arguably one of those, as it was particularly designed in favor of a specific political faction within the NDP.

primarily attained through the intervention of local actors who provide services and also gain power and influence. These local agents fulfill a variety of sociopolitical roles as figures of leadership, authority, and sometimes even piety and good deeds, as manifested in some of the examples of lesser notabilities presented in chapters IV and V.

Therefore, with the observation that lesser notabilities serve a plethora of personal and political interests, a question of power and also exploitation and exercise of influence by these notabilities over the popular polity is well in place. In fact, as shown in the example of Misr Al Qadima, the popular polity is incrementally morphing into a setting for ongoing contests over power and authority between state and societal/non-state actors, exemplified in this study by the lesser notabilities. In addition to the crucial role played by lesser notabilities as distributors of resources among the populace[450], they have also fulfilled other sociopolitical roles as intermediaries between locals and state authorities, mediators and arbitrators in personal conflicts, election brokers and campaigners and sometimes even as coercive executers of order – in their own terms – within the polity. Given their crucial role in administering the affairs of the popular community, lesser notabilities have become a major target for the cooptation of state authorities, due to their increasingly elevating stature as powerful sociopolitical actors.

[450] Lesser notabilities and the political groups they are affiliated with engage predominantly in distribution of resources and, to a lesser extent, in the production and acquisition of some commodities and resources, as shown in the involvement of some popular notables in the skin tannery and construction industries. The main focus of this study, however, has been on the role played by lesser notabilities in distribution and circulation rather than production. This is due to the fact that, first, and as portrayed in Nazih Ayubi's contributions presented in Chapter I, in the relatively nascent Middle Eastern polity of the modern state, modes of circulation play a more important role than modes of production in determining the sociopolitical agency of individuals and institutions. This in part relates to the fact that most of the Middle Eastern and a multiple other so-called Third World polities are yet characterized with a class-structure that, to date, is not similar to the modern western/industrial/capitalist society, where modes of production are by far more influential in determining socioeconomic and political outcomes rather than modes of circulation. This point is discussed with further detail in Chapter I, pages 22 and 30.

The Lesser Notable and Contours of State/Society Interaction, Collision and Collusion:

A State within the State? Al Hokouma and the alternative state

In the first chapter of this writing, it was stated that the people's conceptualization of the state on the popular level determines to a great deal the way they perceive and deal with the official institutions of the state. Practically speaking, for most of Cairo's popular dwellers, the word 'state', in Arabic '*dawla*', is almost synonymous to '*hokouma*' or 'government' in English. Yet, in the context of Cairo's popular quarters, the main agent of governance is the police apparatus, and thus what those people mean by '*hokouma'* is actually the police apparatus. Put simply, in the eyes and minds of the majority of Cairo's popular quarter dwellers, the state is the police.

Applying this model on the case of Misr Al Qadima, one notes that this sort of state conceptualization sheds some light on the role of the state in the lives of Cairo's popular polity dwellers today. The perception of the state only as the police apparatus and the sheer reduction in its perceived role to solely reflect the coercive and enforcing police apparatus reveals that the modern Egyptian nation-state, perhaps as originally perceived by the Nasser regime post 1952 as a service-based welfare entity is, in reality, no more, particularly within the popular communities. Logically, the gap that was created with the gradual retreat of the welfare state had to be filled by a variety of actors, mostly from within the society, and this explains the rise of intermediaries such as lesser notabilities to prominence, and the increasing importance of their role in channeling a wide set of services and resources to the populace. Hence, the ability of such notabilities to have access to and circulate resources among potential clients is a main determinant in shaping the scope and magnitude of the political agency enjoyed by these intermediaries, for this

also enhances their propensity to fulfill the aforementioned multitude of social and political roles they fulfill as virtual administrators of the popular community.

As catapulted in Misr Al Qadima, in fulfilling their roles as vital sociopolitical actors in the popular polity, lesser notabilities have virtually collectively, albeit mostly unconsciously, engaged in a process of creating a societal structure that has become increasingly capable of fulfilling a lot of the functionalities of the waning and withdrawing state-institutions. This process also entails a crucial role for NGOs such as ISIs, within which the lesser notabilities have been quite pivotal also, as seen in the case of the JS. The mounting importance of the roles that such notabilities play in the popular community is reflected in the growing dependence of the 'formal' political actors, i.e. the MPs and the MC members, on these figures to consolidate their positions in and administer the affairs of the popular polity. This is reflected, for example, in arenas such as the parliamentary and municipal electoral processes in Misr Al Qadima, in which the informal networks maintained by the lesser notabilities play a tremendous role in determining electoral outcomes.

And here it could be argued that this lesser notability-influenced societal structure is indeed echoing what was suggested in Chapter I regarding the process of cultivating an alternative state; a 'state-within-a state', which is, in a sense, gradually encroaching upon the venues of the formal state; almost colonizing them. This is exemplified, for instance, in the networks that several notabilities posses with the police apparatus and their subsequent ability to act as intermediaries between the populace and such state-institutions, as portrayed in chapters IV and V. Henceforth, it is safe to assume that a symbiotic relationship between the informal and the formal is in the making. In such a

relation, the state benefits from the array of social networks possessed by figures like lesser notabilities and, in return, it provides them with a plethora of benefits and privileges that empower them further and help consolidate their positions as powerful sociopolitical actors in the popular community. This connotes that, almost coinciding with its withdrawal from the arena of administering the affairs of the popular polity and in order for it to execute its policies and govern the populace; the 'formal' state is, in practice, becoming increasingly reliant on the sociopolitical agency of lesser notabilities in fulfilling a number of its previously ascribed functionalities. Indeed this process of 'informalisation' that the Egyptian state has been going through coincides with the state/society models introduced by analysts such as Joel Migdal and Salwa Ismail, in the first chapter. Similar to what is portrayed in the Egyptian polity, Migdal says that, often, there exists an ongoing process of interactive dynamism between the official venues of the state and the informal actors within the society, which makes it unrealistic to attempt to perceive the state in isolation of the society or vice versa.

The sovereignty of the Egyptian state in the popular polity is also challenged on regular basis. As shown in the case of Misr Al Qadima, the state finds itself in constant competition with other centers of sovereignty that tend to challenge its authority and sometimes create alternative venues in order to fulfill the functions that state-institutions are supposed to be performing. This echoes Thomas Hansen's and Finn Stepputat's propositions concerning the limitations of the sovereignty enjoyed by the state. The incremental withdrawal of the state from administering the affairs of the populace in the popular communities of Cairo makes state sovereignty an arena for contestation with social groups, as the MB, or certain actors like the lesser notabilities. As reviewed in

several cases in this research, these entities often attempt to assert their claim to sovereignty via a plethora of socioeconomic and political venues. The case of the JS which was represented in Chapter IV is an example that reveals that the influence of some of these non-state actors can sometimes exceed that of the state in the socioeconomic and political realms.

Also the dominant role that the informal patron-client networks play in influencing the affairs and further shaping the ideologies and policies of various civil society organizations, such as the ISIs and the state-sponsored NGOs, suggests that the neoliberal model which calls for the empowerment of civil society organizations as substitutes to the state is, in practice, unrealistic.

> Civil society is the area where political and social forces are most active and where political confrontations between these forces are forged. It is also where the state is a major political and economic player... [It] should be seen as more than the sum of its organisations: it is the environment in which these organisations develop and interact. Civil society organisations are the product as well as the components of the society as a whole and their formation an ongoing process which is born out of continuing changes in domestic social forces, the state, and the complex in which the two interact.[451]

Indeed the various examples of civil society organizations cited in this study portray that the mainstream 'modernist' approaches that place the civil society in opposition to the state and perceives the two as distinctively separate entities with clear-cut boundaries are, in reality, impractical. In addition to the wide array of NGOs and other sorts of civil society organizations that are directly or indirectly supported and sponsored by the state and the ruling NDP, the heavy intervention and considerable restrictions that are imposed

[451] Maha Abdelrahman (2002) "The Politics of Un-Civil Society in Egypt". *Review of African Political Economy* 29, 91

by the Egyptian state on the civil society show that it is virtually a hegemonic actor in the civil society arena.

The prospects of the NDP vis-à-vis the MB: political patronage, cooptation of lesser notabilities and the role of the MCs

Whether it is attained via the overarching web of ISIs or the relatively more recently established NGOs that are affiliated with prominent NDP cadres, the competition over recruiting and co-opting lesser notabilities is a happening reality in Cairo's popular quarters. Chapters IV and V revealed that, for most of the electoral campaigners and the political cadres affiliated with the NDP and the MB, recruiting such notabilities and collaborating with them within the web of political patronage of the NDP and MB leading cadres was a prime target to be achieved. This is not to say that lesser notabilities are, in this context, merely passive objects that are on the receiving end of the NDP's and MB's activities. As manifested in various sections of this study, despite the fact that the gradual rise in the role of the Lesser Notable as a viable popular sociopolitical figure almost coincided with the launch of the Open Door and liberalization policies adopted by the state, the elevation of the lesser notabilities to the forefront of the popular polity was not a sheer byproduct of such policies. Lesser notabilities have indeed utilized and built upon on the opportunities that were created for filling-in the gaps within the socioeconomic and political maps of the popular community.

As mentioned in Chapter I and II, in the Middle Eastern polity, a plethora of categories of lesser notabilities have gone through a process of historical evolution that situated them in a position that allowed them to acquire considerable power and influence within the popular polity, even after the inception of the modern nation-state in the 20th Century. Chapters II and III explained that, post *infitah*, the sociopolitical agency of

lesser notabilities evolved in a way that enabled them to increasingly fulfill a variety of socioeconomic and political functionalities in the popular polity. Thus, it is noteworthy to mention that the sociopolitical agency of lesser notabilities appears to be an evolving, rather than a stagnant or a fixed, agency, which is affected by and is interactive with the socioeconomic and political contexts within which lesser notabilities thrive.

As far as most of the lesser notabilities are concerned, no particular political allegiances are necessarily constant or fixed. Subsequently, depending on the sociopolitical context and the benefits that they could reap from the prospective mutually-beneficial relationships that are to be established and consolidated with the NDP or the MB at particular points in time, several examples of these notabilities have switched alliances between the NDP and MB. Generally speaking, most of the lesser notabilities do not adhere to particular ideologies or political platforms.[452]

It is the observation of the researcher and a handful of those interviewed for the purpose of this study in the milieu of Misr Al Qadima community, that, to date, the MB and its affiliated organizations have been more capable of impacting the lives of the Misr Qadima locals than the NDP.[453] This comparative supremacy could be attributed to the prevalence of the MB-affiliated grassroots and community-based socioeconomic and

[452]Look Chapter IV, pages 177-182, for a note on the general characteristics of the Lesser Notable, which include the recurring tendency of some notabilities to swing back and forth between the NDP and the MB. Examples like Hajj Bakr Omar and Hajj Sayyed Abdelaal show that the political convictions and allegiances of lesser notabilities are likely to be altered between the NDP and the MB.

[453]Here, there are no particular indicators for a comparison of the degrees of influence of the NDP vis-à-vis the MB. The observation that the researcher and the respondents have noted relate to the scope of services that is provided by MB-affiliated organizations and which remain unmatched by NDP-affiliated entities to date. As asserted in different sections of the research, in areas like Misr Al Qadima and other popular communities in Cairo, and apart from some individual initiatives from one governor or MC member or another, the state has been only partially successful in terms of providing inhabitants with basic infrastructural services: water, sanitation, electricity…etc. This makes social services like health care and educational facilities almost secondary on the agenda of the state and the ruling party; a virtual luxury that the state is hardly able to provide, and that is where such MB-affiliated organizations come in to fill in parts of this increasingly growing gap.

political services in the popular quarters for a very long time, compared to the relatively more recent awakening that brought the NDP and its affiliated personnel and NGOs to the forefront of popular mobilization. Other factors also add up to the comparative supremacy of the MB in the popular milieu, such as the presence of a plethora of ISIs with comparatively sizable budgets that sometimes exceed those of the state itself in the realm of certain aspects of social services, as seen in the example of the JS.

The ISIs indeed constitute an integral part of the Islamist project of the MB, which consists of an amalgam of socioeconomic and political networks, including MB-associated businesses, educational facilities, communal mosques…etc. Chapter IV shows that this virtual state-within-a-state of the MB, which arguably aims at redefining state/society boundaries via establishing an alternative system to the failing state-institutions, has played a considerable role in providing the populace with a wide scope of services that were largely unmatched by the NDP. Conversely, in the case of the NDP, the lack of such social institutions, mostly for decades, has left the ground open for the MB and its affiliated ISIs to reign supreme in this department throughout the 1970's, 1980's and most of the 1990's, as this was the period that witnessed the gradual disappearance of the modern/secular state from the realm of socioeconomic services.[454]

There are some mixed signals concerning the prospective scenarios pertaining to political patronage and lesser notability alliances with the NDP vis-à-vis the MB. Despite the tendency of the NDP to focus its activities in the realm of popular politics in the

[454] As one tries to assess performance of the political parties (the NDP and the MB), they might sometimes appear as external forces with exogenous resources facing passive recipients. This is so because the focus of this section is specifically on party activity. It is yet crucial to note that lesser notabilities and other sociopolitical figures have been also active subjects that helped stir social and political change in the popular communities of Cairo.

recent years, the MB and its affiliated ISIs still appear to be an influential side in this milieu, as we have seen in Misr Al Qadima. The exemplar case of *Al Jamme`yya Al Sharr`eyya* displays that it will be virtually impossible for the NDP or the state-apparatus to breakdown the multifaceted web of patron-client networks and resources maintained by the ISIs, unless they succeed in substituting the socioeconomic roles such ISIs seem to fulfill. In the meantime this is somewhat impractical given the wide scope of activities sponsored by the ISIs and the subsequent inability of the state-apparatuses to compete with them. Instead, an arena that might hold some promise for the efforts of the NDP in this regard is the municipalities (MCs)[455] that the NDP and its associated state-apparatuses seem adamant on consolidating, as mentioned in chapters IV and V. It remains questionable whether this prospective clampdown over the municipalities will suffice for offsetting the entrenched network of political patronage that is maintained by the MB and the ISIs, as we are yet to see how the NDP will perform in this arena. However the municipalities appear to be a potential window of opportunity that the NDP could capitalize upon in order to counterbalance the prowess of the MB on the popular level.

Summations: An Attempt to answer the research questions posed in the first chapter

One of the main questions posed earlier in the course of this study relates to the seeming structural reconfiguration that is taking place within the Egyptian polity in the early 21st Century and the implications this reconfiguration might have with regard to reshaping the political map of Egypt. Put simply, with the mobilization of societal actors

[455] See Chapter I, pages 23-24, and Chapter V, pages 194-197, for a discussion of the role of municipalities and the recent emphasis that the NDP has been putting on the prospective role of the MCs in leading the process of decentralization.

and sociopolitical classes that is taking place in the Egyptian polity, new categories of viable and politically meaningful actors that differ from the ones prevalent during the Nasser and the Sadat phases (1952-1981) are being created. For example, the 1980's and 1990's witnessed the elevating importance of the political agency of the business community as opposed to the military and the technocratic classes which were rather dominant during the socialist heydays of Nasserite Egypt. So, to what extent has this structural alteration - witnessed in the post-*infitah* phase - empowered new classes of sociopolitical patrons and clients? And if so can one identify a certain set/sets of sociopolitical actors that are likely to prevail within the Egyptian polity as a result?

As shown in various parts of this study, it is safe to assume that, especially within Cairo's popular quarters, there is an increasingly noticeable role that is being played by a variety of non-state sociopolitical actors, be it individuals or social entities/institutions, in most of the mundane and daily affairs of the people of the popular polity. The sociopolitical meaningfulness and influence of those non-state actors coincided with and was directly proportional to the gradual, and sometimes abrupt, state withdrawal from the arena of social and economic services. For the most part, the category of the Lesser Notable stands out as one of the most visible and powerful categories of sociopolitical actors in the popular polity today.

As displayed in chapters II and III, lesser notabilities have dwelled and thrived in various historical junctures within the Middle-Eastern city and it is not an entirely novel social phenomenon to see this grouping of sociopolitical actors rise to prominence in the popular quarters of Cairo in the early 21st Century. However, it is yet important to try and analyze the factors that led to the societal restructuring that brought those lesser

notabilities to the forefront of the political setting of the popular polity. Aggregately, the category of sociopolitical actors that this study refers to as 'Lesser Notables' are those societal figures that posses and have access to extensive and multifaceted webs of socioeconomic and political networks, within the community and on the level of state-institutions, and are characterized with their popular socio-cultural personas. They are also noted for their piety and good deeds in the popular community[456], being the mediators in conflicts and the intermediaries with state authorities and administrations. This research suggests that the failure/withdrawal of the welfare state created socioeconomic and political gaps of sorts that were almost necessarily filled by this category of notabilities.

Also, and as stated prior in various sections of this writing, there appears to be a directly proportional relationship between the withdrawal of the state and the rise of lesser notabilities, whereby the sociopolitical agency of the Lesser Notable came into shape and was rather enhanced with the increasing retreat of the welfare state in the post-*infitah* phase. Concluding this writing, one notes that a finer category of lesser notabilities than the one this study introduced initially is well in place. In addition to the aforementioned characteristics of the Lesser Notable, the findings of this research also show that most of the lesser notabilities that were scrutinized in the course of this study are becoming increasingly involved in the formal/official state-sponsored venues of

[456] In chapters I and II, the importance of lesser notabilities projecting an image of piety and benevolence is stressed. This is exemplified in the case of various Lesser Notables acquiring the title 'Hajj', which connotes religious piety and moral goodness. Look also Chapter IV, page 177, where Hajj Sayyed Abdelaal refers to the importance of the lesser notability figure maintaining a social/moral role as a pious notable, sustaining a persona of helpfulness and giving, regardless of his MB or NDP affiliation. As seen in Chapter IV, this image of piety and good deeds is essential for almost all of the MB-affiliated notabilities and in Chapter V we have seen also examples for this with several NDP-affiliated notabilities such as the NDP Services Office secretary, Hajj Ahmed Najjar, and others like Hajj Abdelhamid Shaalan, and Hajj Gad Megahed.

political action. Even the MB-affiliated notabilities are now becoming increasingly involved with state institutions, such as the police apparatus and government ministries, and state-sponsored political activities, such as the municipal and parliamentary elections. This aspect of involvement is indeed crucial; in order for the notability to fulfill his/her social function properly. Building alliances and networks within state-institutions helps in elevating the sociopolitical stature of the notable, allowing him/her to actualize social roles such as the intermediary with the state and the arbitrator at times of conflict.

With the dominance of political patronage, and the widespread role that patron-client networks have as an effective tool of circulating resources and cultivating political power and influence within the Egyptian polity in general, it was logical for lesser notabilities to utilize such tactics of political patronage to establish and further consolidate their statures. The absence of the state and the ascent of the lesser notabilities mostly coincided with the rise of politically Islamist groups- mainly the MB- to the forefront of the political scene in Egypt. Particularly within the popular quarters, the Islamists' rise to political prominence was also majorly attributed to the withdrawal of the state and its institutions, which were no longer capable of delivering the services needed by the people, especially those of the low-income communities. The MB, which has been active in the realm of social work since its establishment, benefited to a great deal from such state failures. Eventually, the scope and magnitude of the services provided by the MB and the affiliated ISIs, more often than not, surpassed the services granted by the state, in terms of quantity, quality and even promptness, as seen in the case of the 1992 earthquake.

The first chapter of this study displayed that the sociopolitical agency of lesser notabilities has been identified as a social phenomenon by a variety of contributors and analysts. Diane Singerman and Janine Clark argued that, in Cairo's popular quarters, informal networks play an important role in administering the affairs of the populace. In this sense, patron-client networks should be viewed as amalgams of reciprocal networks that represent a political resource as well as a political institution for the populace, rather than a mere embodiment of exploitative relationships. Thus, building upon this conceptualization, it is only safe to assume that the role of the intermediaries that would facilitate the smooth exchange of resources and benefits between patrons and respective clients within such networks is rather crucial, as shown in various sections of this study. Salwa Ismail, in specific, outlined the seeming rise of the Lesser Notable figure in Cairo's popular quarters and drew a general sketch that summarizes the main socioeconomic features of such personas. In doing so, Ismail stated that the sociopolitical agency of the lesser notabilities is in the making and that, subsequently, one needs to analyze their modes of action, alliances, and allegiances.[457]

One of the main objectives of this research is to build upon the contributions of these aforementioned analysts who called for an alternative perception concerning the dynamics of informal networks in the popular polity, as opposed to the dominant focus on state-centered institutional politics that characterized the majority of the literature dealing with Middle East society and politics. In this regard, the study at hand aimed at scrutinizing the politics of lesser notabilities and the possible directions that their involvement in local and national politics may take. The findings of this research suggest

[457] See Chapter I, pages 36-41, for an overview of the contributions of the second generation of analysts that tackled the issue of informal networks of politics in the modern Middle Eastern polity.

that, primarily due to the sizable role they play in shaping the informal socioeconomic and political networks of the popular polity, lesser notabilities partake in reducing the already blurry boundaries between sate and society and have thus been key-players in the political patronage of the NDP as well as the MB. Indeed lesser notabilities could be considered as meaningful actors in the MB's project, which has succeeded in getting through to the predominantly state-neglected popular communities. As long as the socioeconomic setting which has favored the flourishing of lesser notabilities as viable sociopolitical actors prevails, they are likely to remain active subjects that fulfill a plethora of social, economic and political roles in the popular communities of Cairo. The lack of a particular political agenda or ideology that gathers them and the fact that sometimes these lesser notabilities also have a set of diverse social and cultural backgrounds, despite the fact that they also share an array of commonalities between them, makes it likely that many of these lesser notabilities could also collaborate with the NDP. This research argues that there appears to be no unitary logic why certain lesser notabilities choose to collaborate with the MB while others ally with the NDP.

Yet, there is of course, as seen in chapters IV and V, a multitude of factors that could drive the Lesser Notable in the direction of the NDP rather than the MB and vice versa. The scope and magnitude of such factors vary, depending mainly on the socioeconomic, political and cultural conditions of the community in which the Lesser Notable thrives and the sort of socioeconomic networks within which he/she operates. For example, in some professional middle-class dominated Cairene polities, it is not uncommon for a Lesser Notable to collaborate with the MB and not the NDP due to the relatively influential socioeconomic and political roles played by the MB in some of

these polities. Within the popular quarter, which is the subject-area of this research, allegiances between lesser notabilities and the NDP or the MB are, by and large, contingent on a diverse set of constantly changing socioeconomic and political rationales, which makes such alliances rather volatile and ever-changing, as asserted earlier. For example, within the popular areas in which the ISIs are active, it is likely to find a handful of MB-associated lesser notabilities. Oppositely, and at certain junctures when the state attempts to, say, clampdown on the activities of political Islamists in a certain neighborhood, as noted in some areas of Misr Al Qadima, it would be rather logical for the lesser notabilities to alter their alliances away from the MB and towards the NDP and so forth. Overall, as manifested in the NDP's attempts to reinvigorate and co-opt the MCs, it appears as if the state-sponsored party is following in the footsteps of the MB when it comes to the attempts of allying itself with the political patronage of lesser notabilities in order to infiltrate through to wider segments of the popular polity.

Throughout this research, it has been shown that the sociopolitical phenomenon of patronage is predominantly present along the various echelons of the Egyptian polity. The Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak political regimes have all attempted to benefit from this scope of patron-client networks in various means and ways. A set of common preconditions for political patronage was somehow prevalent throughout the phases of Egypt's three chief regimes post 1952. First, the presence of a *shilla* or a clique of first-rate clients that are all linked to the ruling circles has been a recurrent theme with Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak. The functioning of these *shillal* took place in a horizontal manner among the various key-players of the Egyptian polity. A vertical scope of patronage that stems from the patron at the apex to clients in a top-down approach has not been

uncommon also throughout that period. Second, the existence of a specific category of clients, a pool from which these clients emerge and that is characterized with a bundle of sociopolitical inclinations and strata, was also crucial for the patron-client networks to take shape and become actualized. As displayed in various sections of this writing, these 'classes' of patrons and clients have altered throughout the eras of Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak. Each of these eras was characterized with a particular taxonomy of relevant patrons and clients, which varied depending on the context that the Egyptian political system existed within at the time.

Building upon the observations regarding patron-client networks, it is safe to assume that the scheme of patronage politics, which operates on various societal and political echelons, plays a great role in shaping the features of the Egyptian polity in the ascent of the 21st Century. What this writing is trying to say is, simply speaking; political patronage has been an existent accompaniment to all the ruling systems post-1952. Indeed, throughout this writing, it has been rather apparent that the political system is mainly reliant also on this scheme of patronage politics in an attempt to build alliances with the relevant political agents in the community. Putting in mind that patronage is an outcome of interlinked processes of clientelism, the presence of a powerful group of patrons within the system is vital for such a complex network to survive and prevail. Contextualizing the phenomenon of political patronage and comprehending the factors that nourish such a scheme is essential, as it would be somehow misleading if we strip such a phenomenon from the realities of the polity within which it is present. Indeed, in order to dissect patronage, we have to examine its manifestations in line with the general politico-economic context within which it is operational. Issues such as socioeconomic

stratification, resources availability, income distribution, and the presence of venues of political participation/representation are among the main topics that need be addressed in order to scrutinize patronage politics. As reviewed in this study, the socioeconomic and political contexts of Egypt in the early 21st Century seem to suggest that different categories of relevant patrons and clients are in place along the various echelons of the polity. Within the popular polity, the lesser notabilities constitute the chief category of sociopolitical agents that shape and influence the scope and magnitude of patron-client networks.

POSTSCRIPT

Unsuccessful Attempts at Political Ascent: Alternative categories of notabilities: Ahmed Abdalla 'Roza' and Al Jeel Center

In the popular polity, one finds that there are societal notables that belonged to the well-educated/secular classes and who were also incapable of pivoting their socioeconomic/political profiles as powerful political actors. In Misr Al Qadima, Ahmed Abdalla 'Rozza' poses a very relevant example in this regard. In fact the experience of Rozza, who passed away in the aftermath of a shocking loss in the 2005 parliamentary elections, probably represents the counter-example of the lesser notable phenomenon, obviously with a minimal degree of political soundness and success. Rozza, who was a well-educated Cambridge graduate and a prominent activist and intellectual ever since the student movement that strongly opposed the policies of President Sadat circa 1971 and onwards, scored a surprisingly low number of votes when he decided to run in the parliamentary election[458]. He did not have well-known strong familial or clan ties to any of the major families of the area, and he was not certainly occupying any commercial or business roles that could enable him to channel some resources and services to his potential supporters. Instead Rozza attempted to create an educational/cultural grassroots base within the Misr Al Qadima community via providing recreational and educational activities to some segments of that community; primarily to the massive population of youth and children in the area.[459]

Rozza's version of societal services came with Al Jeel Center for Research and Youth Development, which could arguably constitute a case study in itself. In fact, the

[458] According to his Al Jeel co-workers, Rozza roughly got 250 something votes, while the winning candidate amassed between 3000-4000 votes.

[459] Interviews with founders and social workers of Al Jeel Center, Cairo, July and August 2008

history and progression that this entity has gone through signify, to a great extent, some of the most vital socioeconomic and political phases that have been witnessed, not only by the `Ain Al Sirra area in particular but also, on the broader level, by Egypt as a whole. Established in 1995 as an initiative by the prominent intellectual and activist Ahmed Rozza to serve the area he belongs to, the center is now home to only a handful of old friends and acquaintances that strive to keep it alive after the demise of its founder in 2006.[460] Once established, the prime objective of the Jeel Center was to act as a focal point of research pertaining to the Misr Al Qadima area, in specific, and the entirety of Egypt in general.

The center had a sizable depository of sources on a wide variety of social, economic, and political issues relating to Misr Qadima and other urban and rural districts in Cairo and other governorates. A periodical journal had also been initiated as a regular produce provided by the center. Additionally, the center paid special attention to the issues facing the children of the area; indeed the Misr Qadima area has one of the highest ratios of child labor all over Egypt,[461] and Rozza had a firm vision that some bondage has to be set between the young activists working at the center and the children of the area, providing those children with an outlet to vent out their creative energy. Rozza's project depended on utilizing the capabilities of those children in some recreational activities that are not necessarily related to a rigid educational program, so he constituted the activities unit at the Jeel Center to serve this purpose. The outcome was somehow successful and

[460] Ibid

[461] According to the figures obtained by development practitioners affiliated with UNICEF and working within the Misr Al Qadima area, the Misr Al Qadima district has one of the highest rates of street children and child labor in all of Cairo, relative to its size and population. The figures revolve around 10,000-20,000 children. Approximately also 14,000 children were considered as primary education drop-outs as stated in the New Fostat documents.

eventually a considerable number of children started to attend the weekly activities of the center.[462]

Furthermore, the center also provided a multitude of other services to the people of the A`in Sira community; a medium-sized library was available for reading and borrowing a wide variety of books in almost all walks of life, and a few resident social workers were available to help solve some of the social hardships faced by the people of the area. However, the center also suffered from a multitude of hindrances that prevented it from creating a sound social base within the community. Mainly, there was a general lack of financial resources, due to Rozza's tendency not to accept any funding or grants from abroad as he viewed that this will inevitably infringe upon the autonomy of the center. Therefore, the main sources of funding were individual contributions from those who were enthusiastic about the center and the principles that it stood for, primarily Rozza and the camaraderie working with him in the milieu of the center. This, by and large, limited the sources of income available. Moreover, the mere nature of the activities and services provided by the center, as a think tank and an activities locale for the marginalized and the voiceless segments of the society, did not help in establishing any networks of support within the community. Thus, when compared to other NGOs or ISIs that were mainly concerned with providing the people of the area with direct services and resources that aided them in their daily affairs, more often than not in return for political allegiance and support to the leading figures within those organizations, the impact of the center was minimal.[463]

[462] Interviews with founders and social workers of Al Jeel Center, Cairo, July and August 2008
[463] Ibid

Rozza's comparatively poor results at the polling stations were not actually a surprise. Overall, the scope of cultural and recreational activities for the marginalized was not a viable asset that one could solely depend upon in the context of political popularity in an area like `Ain Al Sira. This in fact draws some noteworthy observations regarding the category of the 'lesser notable' and the meaningfulness of the role that he/she could play in the context of the popular quarters of Cairo. Sound financial capacities, irrelevance of educational merits, firm familial/clan ties and a prominent position within the community as the leader or the "*Ibn El Balad*"[464] are all essential features if one is to enter the realm of the 'lesser notables' and, one way or another, these features were all absent in the case of Ahmed Rozza. When entering the contest of political popularity, Rozza could not compete with such figures on that level. In actuality, the alternative example that he attempted to provide further clarifies that such ventures could not bring their inceptors to the forefront of political agency, unless they were armed with the necessary tools mentioned above.

[464] Look chapters II and III for an elaborate discussion of the *Ibn Al Balad* figure and his/her role in the popular quarter.

APPENDIX: OUTLINE OF INTERVIEWS

The fieldwork upon which this study is based was conducted over a period of a year and a half of field visits to Misr Al Qadima and other popular quarters in Cairo, which extended from the fall of 2007 to the spring of 2009. It consisted of more than 50 in-depth and open-ended interviews, mainly with the people of the Misr Al Qadima area, in addition to personal observations of everyday activities and interactions. During the same period, I also conducted a set of interviews with a variety of politicians, journalists and NGO activists from all over Cairo. The names of most of the interviewees mentioned in this writing are real names, used of course with the permission of those interviewed. However, with some of the lesser notabilities cited, and due to the sensitive nature of the information they provided, I have used pseudonyms, in accordance with the preference of the interviewees.

Most of the interviews were on a one-to-one basis, nonetheless some of them were held in small groups at a café, an NGO or a party office, or at the workplace, as stated in the research. The socioeconomic backgrounds and professional occupations of the majority of those that I conducted in-depth and one-to-one interviews with are elaborated upon in the writing. Yet this has not been the case with some of the respondents interviewed in small groups or on the street, and these were referred to in the course of the writing as Misr Al Qadima residents or NDP members…etc. Therefore, in order to display an overall sketch of the socioeconomic biographies of the respondents, it is rather relevant to insert the following table, which represents an overview of the gender and the principal occupation of all of those interviewed for the purpose of this study.

Job/Sociopolitical Occupation	Male	Female	Total
Doctors	2	1	3
Engineers	2		2
Journalists	3		3
JS employees	4		4
Lawyer	1		1
Leather Merchants	4		4
Merchants (other)	1	1	2
MC members	2	1	3
MPs	2		2
NDP employees (income solely form the NDP)	2	1	3
NGO Chairperson		2	2
NGO employees	5	4	9
Peddlers		2	2
Researchers	2		2
State employees	1		1
University students	3	1	4
Workers	3		3
Workshop owners	4		4
Total	41	13	54

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